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AFTER HIS KIND

JOHN COVENTRY



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NEW YORK

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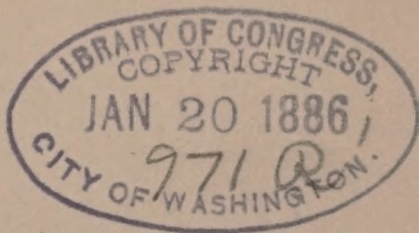
JOHN COVENTRY

[John Williamson Palmer]

ORLANDO: Are you native of this place?

ROSALIND: As the conie, that you see dwell where she is kindled.

—*As You Like It*: Act. III. Sc. 2.



NEW YORK
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

1886

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TO THE
WINIFREDA
OF MY REAL LIFE,
WHOSE CHARMS AND VIRTUES ARE FAINTLY REFLECTED
IN THE WINIFRED OF MY FICTION.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
PROLOGUE: "SURNAMED DIABOLUS,"	I
I. AT THE SIGN OF THE CHEQUERS.—FIRST SIGHT.	7
II. OVERSTOKE.—"SIR MARMADUKE,"	17
III. WHO ARE YOU?—PHYLLIS, ...	28
IV. BRIGNAL.—LADY GOODLUCK, ...	42
V. STRAY LINKS;	53
VI. THE AMERICAN AT OVERSTOKE, ...	62
VII. THE SQUIRE'S PSALM.—AT THE LODGE, ...	72
VIII. A RAMBLE AND A SPECTRE, ...	83
IX. THE CHURCHYARD.—A STORY AND A RIBBON, ...	97
X. SOCIAL AND LYRICAL.—DECLINED WITH THANKS, ...	110
XI. MISTRESS AND MAID, ...	130
XII. LADY GOODLUCK AT HOME, ...	140
XIII. KITH AND KIN.—PLAYING WITH FIRE, ...	153
XIV. A GROUP.—"YOU AND I,"	163
XV. LOST AT SEA.—DOLLY ON GUARD, ...	179
XVI. GLAMOURIE.—DRAWING THE LINE, ...	194
XVII. "ALL'S RIGHT WITH THE WORLD,"	210
XVIII. A NOCTURNE, ...	221
XIX. A MINISTER OF GRACE AND A GRACELESS MINISTER.	229
XX. THE OTHER WOMAN.—BARBARA'S TRAP.—EXIT VICAR, ...	243
XXI. CONFIDENTIAL.—THE ROMANY'S TOKEN, ...	261
XXII. MILDRED'S CHILD.—AT LAST!	276
XXIII. DEATH RISES TO EXPLAIN, ...	293
XXIV. AN END AND A BEGINNING, ...	307
EPILOGUE: "WINIFREDA,"	316

PROLOGUE.

“SURNAMED DIABOLUS.”

ON the seventh day of August, 1782, the good ship *Favorite*, Buchanan master, sailed from Baltimore bound for Marseilles, with wheat, tobacco, and a Jonah, who, being cousin to the captain, familiarly Bob'd that gallant officer's baptismal Robert. 'Twas a jovial Jonah of twenty-three, a curly-pated, comely and engaging scapegrace, unvexed by instructions of prophecy, whom any whale, not supernaturally dainty, might have entertained with pleasure; and its profane name was Richard Shustoke, of Garrison, in the County of Baltimore, Gent.

Just sixty-seven years before the eventful sailing of the *Favorite*, the grandsire and namesake of her bonny passenger,—to wit, Richard Shustoke, of Wynhold, in the County of Midland, Gent.—had shaken English dust from his feet and fled over sea to the Maryland plantations, for fresh air and free thoughts. For the incubus of British respectabilities and bores, represented by many

generations of squires and county magistrates, relieved here and there by a high-sheriff for the shire, had sat upon his protesting spirit, and would have squelched it flat and dry; but when the deliverer came, in the name of Church and State, and invited younger sons and yeomen away to the virgin acres by the Chesapeake, away to the fair fields opened to courage and faith by the courtly Calverts, then he "heard his days before him, and the tumult of his life—"

"Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic
sails,

Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly
bales;"

and he flung the old conventional bore over the wall of the family graveyard, and fled westward for freedom and fortune, and all the rapture of the Improper.

Established on the banks of the Severn (where he found ample scope for the exercise of his native sagacity and pluck, in the direction of wheat and tobacco, crude iron and water-power), he so rapidly enlarged his fortunes and his fame that within three years he took unto himself a wife, in the fair person of Mistress Johanna Carden, a "lady of quality," whose family, in respect of importance and influence, was second only to that of the Lords Baltimore. To the intellectual and moral sap in the stock of the Cardens the young State was indebted later for a beloved patriot and

statesman, an illustrious prelate, and more than one governor.

Three boys were born to the Shustokes; but before the oldest, Richard, had come to his majority, their father died. Then the widow took up her penates and her *impedimenta*, and with her lads moved northward to the rich Patapsco hills, and pitched her tents on new land in a forest, where once the earlier settlers had held a stockade against roving bands of red men. Hence they called the place "Garrison," and here they built a substantial manor-house, and dwelt secure and prosperous within ten miles of the coming Baltimore. Here, in 1756, the widow died; here also Richard, in 1785,—married, but childless. James Carden Shustoke, never strong, nor ever taking kindly to the new home, had gone to join his father "in the far land" before the house was built. And so it was left to Charles, the youngest, who married early, to perpetuate the pithy Saxon stock among the hills of Maryland, and to inscribe its name in the early annals of the State.

Of the ten children of "Charles and Rebecca," this story has to do with only one, and for him it has but Hail and Farewell!—for he was the Jonah of the *Favorite*. Strong, handsome and debonair; impetuous, generous and brave; incapable of a shabby thought and scornful of a prudent plan, he was turbulent and tender, reckless and

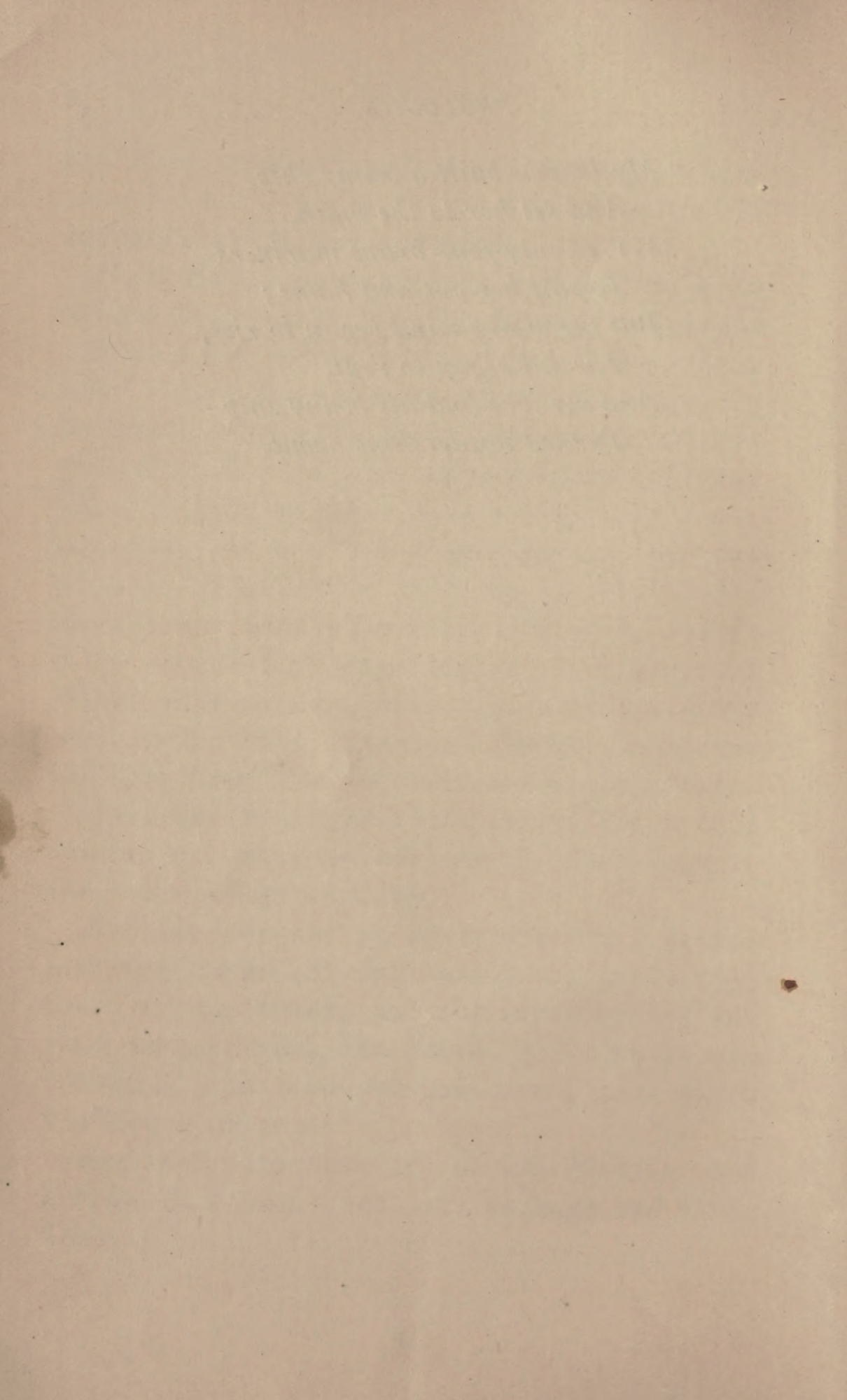
repentant, stubborn and pliant, defiant and gracious—either or all, within the measure of a mood, and while a dull man marveled.

Hard rider, deep drinker, mad player, quick striker, fierce wooer, with his heart in his mouth and his purse in his hand, “Devil Dick Shustoke!” the despair of magistrates and clergy, the delight of women, the darling of servants, and the wonder of all. Only his mother understood him. When he had made the county too hot to hold him, she said, “the dear boy is growing restless; this place is dull for him, he needs change; we all need change from time to time, the best of us. There is the sweet old home in England, that his grandfather loved to talk about. ’Tis time some one went over to see it, and our people there, the Midland Shustokes. There are the parish registers and the churchyards and tombs; they would amuse him. He shall sail with Cousin Robert in the *Favorite*—for a change.”

And he sailed, as we have seen; he laughed, and he sailed away. And magistrates and clergy drew a long breath; and the servants and the poor people cried like idiots; and the women whispered, and watched each other, and asked, “Which is the one?”

And that was the last of the *Favorite* and Cousin Buchanan, wheat and tobacco and Devil Dick.

*“ My love he built a bonny ship,
And set her to the main,
Wi’ twenty-four brave mariners
To sail her out and hame ;
But the weary wind began to rise,
The sea began to rout,
And my love and his bonny ship
Turned withershins about.”*



AFTER HIS KIND.

CHAPTER I.

AT THE SIGN OF THE CHEQUERS.—FIRST SIGHT.

AT “The Chequers,” at Yawdley, three roads and three coaches met: from northern Sylcaster, and eastern Ausibel, and western Bolingstone. As yet the nearest line of rail was ten miles away; as yet the “branch,” with stations at Wynhold and Yawdley, was but a shareholder’s dream; and so it was that even so late as 1851 “The Chequers” was still a coaching house—one of the few “merrie” things remaining in Merrie England. So much the more jealously did “The Chequers” cling to its traditions, and from horse-trough to tap-room, from corn-bin to larder, from blowsy scullion to buxom bar-maid, from Boots to Boniface, proclaim itself a time-honored English hostelry, with entertainment for man and beast: as when the “grave person” in *Joseph Andrews* rode into the inn in the dusk of the evening, “and committing his horse to the

hostler, went directly into the kitchen, and having called for a pipe of tobacco, took his place by the fire-side."

Ivy-draped to the chimney tops, with its upper casements diamond-paned and latticed, its square brown tower and mossy eaves and gables and embowered porch softly showing through the great oaks that screened it from the highway, this pleasant old house turned to the coming and the parting guest, alike, a countenance of conscious benevolence and peace: most like some genial gentlewoman of old family, who hath her functions of hospitality to discharge, graciously, as for the honor of her name.

Luke Crotty, "Sylcaster Luke," as he turned his four well-bred bays, without checking their trot, into the broad coach yard, and brought them up gayly before the snug stables, was accustomed to deliver himself of a hearty "Hah!" of satisfaction, as he shouted to his quadrupedal coadjutors, "Well, here ye are, my sonnies! where the beast is as good as the man."

And that jolly old buffer, Malthouse of Ausibel, "a warm man" in the ironmongery line, who stopped over for "the Bolingstone" for a bit o' business, always napped in the tap-room in his slippers, between a toby of ale and a churchwarden pipe, with his feet up on another fat chair; or poked the fire and hummed "Come, gentle god of soft repose!" And when the time came for

him to take his place for Bolingstone, that sensuous ironmonger groaned reluctantly as he pulled on his boots, swore that "The Chequers" always made him feel like an unmarried turtle, and tipped the buxom bar-maid with a half-crown and a wink, for the rapture of hearing her remark (in a way of her own, that cleverly blushed at the coin and pocketed the wink), "O, Mr. Malthouse, sir, you are just beautiful!"

One day Toby Hindman, ponderous and rubicund, paunched superfluously even for his calling, fat as to his eyes, fat as to his hands, fat as to his voice—Toby Hindman sat at the great round table in the parlor, feebly seeming to read the Bolingstone *Patriot*, while the buxom bar-maid pretended, more successfully, to explore the low ceiling for cobwebs, dust the sporting prints with a peacock brush, or polish the glasses on the great mahogany side-board.

"Dolly," said mine host, "did you observe the gent that took the Sylcaster inside this morning—the one with the lofty air, and tuppence for Boots?"

"Law! Mr. Hindman, sir, whatever could so deceive you? The person who inquired if my ale was from the wood! The likes of such I never observe."

"Then you did not hear what he arsked *me*?"

"Never, sir; I hope I know my place."

"Well, that gent with the tuppenny lofty air

asked me, says he, 'Are you the proper-rioter of this 'otel'?' "

"O, the impudence! Well, did ever? And what did you say, Mr. Hindman, sir? O!"

"Dolly, for as much as a minute there was an awful silence; you might have heard my blood boil. Then I just covered him, from his wig to his boots, with one of my glances. You know my scornful glance, Dolly!"

"O, Mr. Hindman, sir, don't call it scornful, call it blarsting; that dreadful crushing it is. Many's the glass it has made me drop (out of my poor little savings), with the tremors and the agitation of it."

"'Sir,' says I, 'have you observed my horse-trough, with 1750 cut in the rim?'—'No,' says he.—'Nor my double pump?'—'Nor the absurd pump,' says he.—'Nor yet my stable clock, with chimes?' says I.—'Nor even your melodious time-piece,' says he, cheeky like.—'Then,' says I, 'I advise you to improve your mind by exploring of them features, separate and collective.' "

"And then? says he."

"'And then,' says I, 'you'll know a tidy old-fashioned English roadside inn, next time you see one. And while your hand's in, if you'll just take an intelligent obserwation o' Me—I'm not supercilious,' says I, 'but I'm solid—you'll not insult my father before me by calling of us proper-rioters of a 'otel. But,' says I, 'if you're suffering for one—

one of the tuppenny lofty sort that was made for the likes of you—you just take a run over to Ausibel, and inquire for the wonderful ahss that took the old “Bag-o’-Nails” last year and turned it into the HOTEL MONTMORENCI, with a he-bar-maid. There you are, sir! ’otel, proper-rioter, and all,’ says I.

“‘And now, sir, may I make so free as to arsk,’ says I, in my sarkastical tone, ‘if you demeaned yourself so far as for to cast your lofty eye on that there sign a-hangin’ on that there oak?’”

• “Says he, ‘The Chequers, good old sign.’”

“‘May I appear so bold,’ says I, ‘as to arsk if you are an ancient antiquarian?’—‘Hardly,’ says he.—‘Hardly,’ says I; ‘old ancient antiquarians don’t go around a-moonin’ for ’otels and proper-rioters. But if you was one of them gentlemen and scholars,’ says I, ‘you’d know that The Chequers was the sign of many an inn two thousand years ago in Pompey-eye; and it meant that if any gent was agreeable for a quiet game o’ chess with another Roman gent, the house could accommodate him with the board and pieces. And though I’m no ancient antiquarian,’ says I, ‘nor yet a scholar, I’m proud to know that them good old Romans, as inwented The Chequers, did wollop and wollop them sickly Frenchmen as inwented ’otels and proper-rioters.’”

Dolly gasped: “And O, Mr. Hindman, sir, didn’t he just die?”

"I did not notice," said Toby.

That day Toby Hindman sat in his pretty porch and waited for the coaches—the Ausibel "Dispatch" arriving first, the Bolingstone "Speedwell" usually a little later. These met daily at The Chequers, and exchanged passengers. The "Sylcaster" made the down trip on alternate days only, coming in the afternoon, putting up at the inn for the night, and returning northward in the morning—thus completing a sort of triangular arrangement for the accommodation of goers between the three towns: an arrangement which allotted to Sylcaster Luke a preponderance of influence and consideration at The Chequers, by reason of the suppers, beds and breakfasts he brought.

As Toby sat in his porch, commanding from his point of vantage a view of the Ausibel road, as it sloped from his gate to Giddyburn bridge and then ascended—gently rising, gently winding, now hiding in a cover of woods, now showing again in the open, until it disappeared over the crest of Wynhold Hill—another man, on no hospitable or other cares intent, but *insouciant*, time-killing, lightly loafing, fondly musing, leaned on the stone railing of the sturdy little bridge, and also waited; if one may be said to wait who merely stands in aimless, easeful idlesse, and plays with

the skein of his own parti-colored thoughts. A figure of young manhood perfect in all its lines, complete in its expression of strength, agility, endurance, supple grace—as a palfrey, a greyhound, a panther, is perfect; a beardless, boyish, wanton face, surmounted by a characteristic distraction of light-brown locks; features purely Greek in their perfection and refinement;—in a word a man of startling and overbearing beauty, yet scornful of all beauty in a man.

This transmuted slip of old Hellas, revealed to the clumsy paganisms of a Midland parish, had emerged from the thicket of Brignal Hurst (“melodious plot of beechen green and shadows numberless,”) and halted by Giddyburn bridge—booted and spurred, and clad in the brown velvetreen riding garb of a young squire.

And so he stood musing, his capricious moods and fancies revealing themselves by flitting gleams and glooms in the eloquent interpretation of his countenance. Presently, brightening gayly, he turned to where a daisied footpath, leaving the bridge on the farther side of the highway, wound under the oaks and alders of the Hurst; and he traced in fancy its rambling course by the bank of the burn, until it swerved to the right and made straight for a gate and an arbor—and a lady!

For a moment he paused, stooping to peer under the low-hanging boughs, and through their jealous lattice of leaves, that hardly parted even for

his friendly glance; and then, in a voice melodious and resonant, he signaled to her in the fond old ballad of "Brignal Banks;" and she responded playfully, matching him verse for verse, until the piping birds took part, and all the leafy nooks were songful.

'Twas a pretty passage of colloquy, framed in a homely ditty, and the troubadour, wholly taken with the sport, had forgotten the coming coach. That gaudy chariot had turned the crest of Wynhold hill, and now came swaying and clattering down the incline, putting on more speed as it neared the bridge, to get headway for the shorter rise beyond, that ended only in the inn yard; for Ausibel Jem had taught his four grays that no coach-horse, proud of its calling, would take that bit of slope in a walk, and crawl into The Chequers like a donkey.

There were the usual passengers of the bucolic or small tradesfolk class, representing that stolid form of Commonplace which is so ethnographically British. Only one was remarkable, and to that extent objectionable: a young man, seated with the coachman on the box, showing a face conspicuously handsome, full-bearded and almost extravagantly mustached—a face animated, genial, gracious, as of a pleasant comrade, and cosmopolite well equipped. But his attire was aggressive, and challenged inquiry while it repelled impertinence: No coat, no waistcoat;

only a sort of shirt or blouse of fine blue cloth, the front simply plaited, and finished at the edges with small silk cord. On either breast was a pocket ; and three small gold studs, like beads, decorated the front. The cuffs were braided with a certain discreet elaboration ; and a white collar at the throat imparted to the garment a character so unique as to suggest the question : “ Have we here a gentleman masquerading as a superior artisan, or an artisan asserting the prerogatives of a gentleman ? ”

Below the larger pocket on his left breast a smaller one was contrived, to hold a handsome watch ; and a short but heavy chain of gold, severely plain, crossed his breast on that side, and was attached to the middle stud. On his head he wore a slouched hat of the *sombrero* pattern, low crowned, excessively wide in the brim, and jauntily turned up at one side, with an effect so accidental that it might have been studied—especially as the broad lock of chestnut hair that escaped in front, and was softly tossed by the breeze of early Spring became the fellow cunningly. Loose trousers, of the same stuff and color as the shirt, and low shoes with fine gray stockings, completed a costume so happily adjusted to the man, that it seemed but the natural expression of his ways.

As the coach came gayly on, and was now within a few rods of the bridge, the stranger drew from his breast-pocket a cigar-case, and was in the

act of opening it, when he first perceived the minstrel in the way. Then a strange thing happened: the man on the box looked down into the eyes of the man on the bridge, and the man on the bridge gazed up into the eyes of the man on the box, with equal intentness and scrutiny. Both faces brightened with the same expression of surprise and curious interest, and both men smiled pleasantly, as in happy reciprocal recognition; yet neither had ever seen the other before that moment, nor ever heard his name. Then the cigar-case fell from the stranger's hand, who made a laughing gesture of dismay as it rolled in the dust. The other quickly caught it, and holding it on high, shouted "At the inn, presently!" and "Thank you, thank you!" came back from the coach as it smartly breasted the hill.

Then the stranger turned to Ausibel Jem.

"Who is that man?"

"That's Devil Dick."

"WHAT!"

"No offense, I hope, sir?"

"Oh no!—odd name, that's all."

And Ausibel Jem remembered that that *was* all: "not another word from the cove in the queer togs, till I brought up at the stables, and he hopped down as light as a dicky bird, and twice as pretty."

Meanwhile Troubadour lolled on the parapet of the bridge, and studied the cigar-case.

“ Silver—and in superlative taste.”

He removed the lid, and drawing forth a cigar contemplated it fondly ; then held it under his dainty nose, and sniffed and sniffed, gazing into vacancy, as one who dreams dreams.

“ I thought so. The man who smokes such exotics as this has seen the world, and seen it with the eyes of a gentleman.”

Then idly turning the toy, he spied an inscription that had been hidden by his hand :—

“ JULIAN SHUSTOKE TO JOHN GRAYHURST.

SAN FRANCISCO. 1849.”

“ By all the immortal Gods ! ” he cried, and set his face eagerly toward the inn.

CHAPTER II.

OVERSTOKE.—“ SIR MARMADUKE.”

GOING afoot from Yawdley toward Ausibel, and approaching Wynhold on the right of the highway, one comes upon a demure lodge of stone, browned with age and greened with mosses, guarding the great gate to the noble avenue of Overstoke. But the venerable and forlorn retainer who “ iver sin’ th’ owd squire’s time ” had held the post of porter, has gone to knock at heaven’s gate now.

Kit Abershaw, the bailiff, is the solitary tenant of the lodge, which has become a mere memorial of its own functions and traditions; for Kit is away all day about a bailiff’s business, and so the great gate stands open between its stately pillars, where the cross-crosslets of the Shustokes, carved in stone, proclaim the careless hospitalities of a tribe whose ways were ever easy ways.

The avenue at Overstoke is the pride of all that country side. When, in 1690, Rupert Shustoke (afterward high-sheriff for the county of Midland, and father and grandfather of his immediate successors in that office), came upon the words

wherein Richard Evelyn describes the glorious approach to Baynards in Surrey, he did rightly set them down for his friend Curzon of Croxall, to divert him withal, “seeing that they do fit themselves with a nice and curious aptnesse to the praise and picturing of my Overstoke okes, which yet are not too big for thy love.”

The oken walke to my house,” saith Evelyn, “was planted about sixty years since” [and mine even likewise, saith Rupert—my grandsire did plant it]. “It is in length about seventy rodde, and hath fifty trees of a side. The walke is in breadth three rodde and a half, and the trees be about twenty-four foot asunder. They do cover the whole walke like an harbour, and spreadde seven rodde and a quarter. Their bodies are but short, being topped when they were planted. For their heads, few excelling them; many of them, being planted by themselves in the parke and not hindered by others, spreadde five rodde apiece.”

Even so the stalwart trees of Overstoke enlarged their giant boles, and “hidden to the knees in fern” did broadly branch and burgeon, making a leafy canopy above, and a shady lane below, for the honor of the stately house that had cuddled in its comfortable bosom the generations of the Shustokes. “A house not only ancient, but beautiful; not a mere husk of antiquity, but full of reverent and noble associations; a gray and lordly dwelling, rising with almost human

dignity from a grassy knoll, with all its pointed gables, and stone-mullioned windows, and tall clustered chimneys, slumbering in the mellow western light." A house with a soulful prospect, of wood-crowned eminences topped by ancient farms, and heathy knolls where pretty cottages foregathered; fair pastures, flecked with cattle and sheep, mirrored in the silver surface of the mere; embosomed little homesteads, grouped in the farther vale; the nearer woods of Brignal Hurst, where the glancing lines of Giddyburn,—in and out, in and out,—showed like a Malay's krees; and beyond, the twin towers that flanked the gate of Flecknoe Castle; and the penciled spires of Ausibel and Yawdley, lifting high their aureoled crosses, and singing to the valley, o' Sundays, the winsome songs of Saint Elfrida and Saint Maudlin—*Melodie nomen geret Magdalene!*

Settled in the soft repose of its own surroundings, lulled by the drowsy country hum, and fanned by the fragrant motions of the Spring, the stately old manor-house takes its afternoon nap, careless of the breeze that, slipping in through the great door between the jutting towers, frisks in the high hall, prying and sniffing among carved cornices and portraits, bucklers, broadswords and halberds, antlers and dog-whips and guns; or mounting the broad stair that winds about a square buttress in the gable, it steals upward to the gallery that leads to the

great “guest-chamber,” and to the smaller dormitories beyond.

Once these apartments housed a royal guest, when the First Charles, conducted hither by Sir William Dugdale, was lodged for a night, while he tarried for tidings from his queen, then on her march southward from Croxall to Stratford-on-Avon. Now the great chamber is a place apart, and its precious remains of rich carvings and stained glass are consecrated to the coming of “the Lord’s Anointed,” if ever again that may be.

The tapestried drawing-rooms, reserved for rare visits of ceremony, are not otherwise invaded, save twice a month, when Mrs. Pennyweight, the housekeeper, comes with her maids and mops, her brooms and feather dusters, to make a careful agitation there; and the historic banqueting-hall, nobly raftered and ornately paneled, with its vast embracing fireplace, its mighty tables, its profound cupboards and its patriarchal clock, is now but a haunt of legend, *awsomely* echoing to the imagination the festal tumult of the good old time, when boon companions of the Shustoke breed held roaring revel here.

The morning-room and the Library, on the left of the hall as you enter, suffice to accommodate the squire’s little household, for all the usual requirements of their simple life. These are square rooms of generous dimensions, wherein the atmosphere of home and soothing accus-

tomedness abides, with such harmonious "fitness of things" that the effect is like the humming of a kettle.

So long have the furniture and the pictures, the curtains and the rugs, dwelt together in genteel and confidential equanimity, that each has caught something of the other's ways of self-respect and family pride; and all have become endeared to each other—so that we can imagine the bereavement and mute dismay of the rest, if the screen should cease to trouble or the bellows breathe its last.

In the Library an old gentleman slept in a chair, "the squire's chair"—a deep-seated heirloom of carved mahogany, cushioned in haircloth. Keyes, the butler, had drawn it in front of the bay window, and on a small table beside it had placed the dish of tea, the newspaper and the pipe; on the floor, the slippers and the stool. Golf, a superannuated fox-hound, almost blind now, had settled prone in his appointed place on the rug; and Keyes, having bestowed upon the prudent fire of logs a butler's tender touch, had withdrawn with a perfect butler's perfect manner, uncreaking, unwheeling, like a spook.

For a while the old man sat and mused, contemplating the domain of peace and pleasantness outspread before him, and embracing in its opulent benediction the vivid verdure of the lawn, the burnished breastplate of the mere, the

impressive pomp of the grove, the prank and prattle of the lonesome rivulet, a happy woodland child that hath no playmate but itself. And the sweet influences of the place overcame him like the pinions of a passing angel; the spell of the spirit's luxury was upon him, the luxury of remembered raptures and sweet regrets and late-won resignations—and so he was gently borne from “dwawms” to dreams.

A beautiful old man! and yet not old, say rather ripe and mellow, like some fine fruit in which the subtle alchemy of the elements and the patient processes of the seasons have done their perfect work. A “frosty-pow,” that yet told the tale of less than sixty winters, surmounted with its silver crown a face of evergreen benevolence, where the rose of childhood lingered to hide the rust of age; a beardless, boyish face, signed with the family nose, the short and slightly aquiline nose of the Shustokes,—as you see it in those portraits there of the three high-sheriffs, Rupert and Marmaduke and Ralph; and the lines of pensive suavity that imparted a personal quality to the inherited refinement of the lips were touched now with lighter curves, as though he had taken a whimsical thought to sleep with him. But the form, compact and vigorous, the attitude, habitual, confident and easy, denoted even in repose possibilities of energy and self-assertion, and a natural strength not yet abated. For the rest, this fine old squire

shall be left to disclose himself in his own speech and ways, and to make friends with the reader by virtue of the gentle and gracious personality he is to bring upon the scene.

And so he slept, and on the hearth the green logs sang softly, and Golf with muffled yelp hunted in dreams—when, without sound and seemingly without motion, a girl entered at the half-open door, and for a moment paused and contemplated the sleeper. An agreeable apparition: tall, slender, swaying; golden-haired, blue-eyed, demure; interesting, even remarkable, yet not beautiful; and though tranquil, troubled; clad in some soft twilight stuff of silver gray, embellished here and there with a knot of violet ribbon; narrow circlets of lace at her throat and wrists, a white rose-bud in her hair.

For a moment she regarded the sleeping man with a smile of pensive tenderness; then stepping noiseless as a fly, moved to a stool somewhat behind him, but not too near, and sat there. In her hand she bore a pretty basket, containing materials for some graceful feminine handiwork; and as she sat she plied her needle listlessly,—now sighing, now smiling, now letting her thin white hands rest in her basket, while with head erect and great blue eyes dilated she gazed into vacancy, in reverie bound and discerning the invisible.

And still the green logs sang softly, and the

embers crackled, and Golf, hunting in dreams, panted and sprang with an eager yelp that awoke the squire, who rubbed his eyes and stretched himself, with a yawn of full content.

“Good-morrow, Lazy-boots!” said the girl.

“Why, my dear, are you there? How long have I slept?”

“Hours and hours. And if Golf had not dreamed of catching that same old fox, you’d be snoring yet.”

“Now, Bab! you know I never snore.”

“True, dear, you only gurgle—but ’tis not Æolian.”

“Has Caryl called?”

“Caryl never calls; he manifests his presence.—No, neither my Mogul, nor anyone except Boots from The Chequers. But Boots brings news. Hindman sends him, ‘with his duty,’ to beg that Phyllis may have leave to come to the inn for an hour. A stranger by the Ausibel coach has come to stay; ‘from foreign parts,’ says Boots, ‘young and a swell.’ Think of that—a superlative exotic in Yawdley!”

“Some gaping tourist probably, with his guide-book, and his tavern manners. But for a pleasant new fellow, with rousing experiences, fresh ideas and crisp talk, with just enough of the gentleman, and a sea-smell in his clothes—ah! but we’d set the bells a-ringing for him, Bab.—Did you send Phyllis?”

“With my blessing did I, and with certain confidential instructions besides, not for the ears of sleepy squires.—A foreign swell: O joy!—and to *stay*; Phyllis is to prepare the best rooms for him, the exhausted sybarite in want of a nice retired grave. And Devil Dick—”

“Barbara!”

“Yes, dear?”

“Go look in that glass.”

“And straightway forget? Well, here I am.”

“Now say ‘Devil Dick.’”

“Not I—it does not suit; I understand. But it fits the man, as naturally as the curling of his hair. Well then, Richard Jekyll, gentleman—to translate the vernacular of Boots into the classic of Barbara—has contrived to get parley with this phenomenon, and to-morrow we shall know what we shall know. Come to Yawdley to stay—since ever the world was! What next? Dick will be looking before he leaps, and Caryl will be doing something impulsive!”

“But you and I, Bab, will have Sir Marmaduke, all the same. Light my pipe, lass, and start the stout old fellow.”

Then the squire’s small roar, a little cracked and quavering, was joined to the soft fluting of the girl, in the after-dinner song of old Marmaduke Shus-toke:

“ Sir Marmaduke was a hearty knight :
 Good man ! Old man !
He’s painted standing bolt upright,
 With his hose rolled over his knee.
His periwig’s as white as chalk,
And on his fist he holds a hawk ;
And he looks like the head
 Of an ancient family—
 Of an an-cient fam-i-lee !

“ He never turned the poor from the gate :
 Good man ! Old man !
But was always ready to break the pate
 Of his country’s enemy.
What knight could do a better thing
Than serve the poor, and fight for his king ?
And so may every head
 Of an ancient family—
 Of an an-cient fam-i-lee !”

CHAPTER III.

WHO ARE YOU?—PHYLLIS.

THE Ausibel and Bolingstone coaches had come and gone, having exchanged passengers with that diurnal reciprocity which represented the commercial and social intercourse of the two towns; and The Chequers was left to meditate upon the significance and the possible importance of the passenger who had been "set down" in the house and in the books.

The stranger, as one accustomed to find his warmest welcome at an inn, had waited for no civilities of reception, but had made himself cheerily at home, with the jauntiness of a boyish satisfaction rather than with the complacency of patronage.

He had had his bath and his nap, his chop and cheese and tankard; and now he would have the landlord in for a chat. His substantial luggage had evoked the oracular approval of Boots, and entertained the more deliberate Hindman with the professional exercise of "putting this and that together," to make a case; so when the bell of the

private sitting-room rang, the master of the house knew what it meant, and answered it in person.

"Are you the landlord of this inn?" inquired the stranger, with a good-humored abruptness which was not lost upon the shrewd fellow before him, ever quick to recognize the signs of what he termed the "right sort."

"At your service, sir. Leastways that is what I try to be. It's not my fault if I look like the proper-rioter of a 'otel."

"Who said you did?"

"A tuppenny lofty gent as took the Sylcaster coach this morning."

The stranger laughed merrily. "What an ass!" said he.

"Thank'ee, sir! I know'd you'd say it. If I might make so bold, you look like it, sir."

"H'm?"—and Hindman, catching the stranger's eye at that moment, was suddenly aware that some one had blundered.

"Arskin' your pardon, sir," he said quickly, and in a tone of careful deference, "I mean them was my very words, sir: 'what an ahss!' says I; and you look like a gentleman as wouldn't blame me. I hope I know what is due, sir, but I was never called that afore."

"I should think not. But, for a bold Briton, it strikes me you are sensitive; you should laugh at that. For example, I was taken for a commercial

traveler at Stanhope, and a circus-rider at Ausibel, when the fact is I am—neither. What is your name?"

"Toby, sir,—Toby Hindman at your service."

"Now that is delightful."

"Begⁿ pardon, sir?"

"I mean your name. I have always fancied it must be pleasant to know a man named Toby : big and round, and rosy and comfortable, of course. But I have had to come far to find him, at home."

He rested upon the last words, in a pause of thoughtful silence ; then changing briskly, said : "So you think you can make me comfortable here, for a month or two, or a year or two?"

"It might be done, sir. I'm not afeard to say it have been done. But then you see, sir, we knowed the parties, and we knowed their ways—all of us ; me and barmaid and housemaid and cook and Boots and hostler, we just larned 'em by heart, so to speak, and let ourselves down to 'em. But you, sir,—Lord bless ye ! we don't even know your name, let alone your notions consarn-in' comfort ; and you a foreign gentleman, too."

"Who said so?"

"Arsking your pardon, sir, you said you had 'come far': Them was your words, if I took 'em rightly ; though, as for speech, sir, nothing could be nativer ; you might have been born in this house, sir, if the house might make so bold."

"I might have been born in this place. H'm !

about one hundred and sixty-five years ago ; I've thought of that.—Oh, my name—Mr. John Grayhurst, Toby. American ; neither commercial traveler nor circus-rider, nor in any other useful or ornamental line ; speaking English 'like a native,' which is nothing to boast of, my friend ; without business here, without acquaintance ; may take my leave in a month, may remain and raise a large family ; will try to amuse myself meanwhile among the milkmaids and gravestones. But about the pretty rooms, are they ready ?”

“ In a short hour, sir, if you'll excuse us for the airing and cleaning. My daughter is over from the House to oversee the maids.”

“ The House ?”

“ Overstoke, the Manor-House, sir. My daughter Phyllis, she is Miss Lynn's own maid—which is Squire Shustoke's niece ; and the young lady she is so good as to give my daughter leave to watch them trifling hussies of mine, and see as they make every thing tidy and snug for you ; for Phyllis has a genteel taste of her own, and a proper pride ; she knows what a gentleman will expect at The Chequers.”

“ And a gentleman will know what to expect from the care and good taste of your daughter. You will thank her for me.”

Hindman bowed and beamed.

“ Now ring for Dolly Sparrow, and let me have some ale in a toby, and a churchwarden pipe.”

“Is it the bar-maid, sir?”

“Certainly. Wonderfully like a sparrow, a superior kind of good-looking sparrow; fresh, frisky, pecky, smart, like a sparrow.”

At that moment enter the Sparrow, bearing a card on a small tray; sharp enough she to detect something personal in the sudden silence and exaggerated gravity of Grayhurst on the one hand, and the apoplectic redness of the landlord, spluttering in his handkerchief, on the other.

“Toby of ale, please,” said Grayhurst, “and a churchwarden. What is this?—for me? Mr. Richard Jekyll? Ah, yes! I remember. Gloriously handsome young fellow in the road—caught my cigar-case.”

The Sparrow blushed irrelevantly, smiled as if her mind was wandering, and then became supernaturally unconscious and grave.

“Landlord, ask the gentleman to do me the honor. Show him to this room, please.”

Master and maid retired, the former returning presently to announce “Mr. Jekyll.”

Again a strange thing: these two men, meeting for the first time, without introduction, without favorable report to incline either in good will toward the other, now advanced with an identical impulse of almost eager cordiality, clasped hands, and so stood for a moment in silence, regarding each other with smiles of spontaneous kindness. Then both said “Happy to meet you!” syllable

with syllable in concert. 'Twas very droll, and both laughed; then each remembered himself, retired within himself, became conscious of himself, and felt foolish, taking refuge in a chair.

"I am John Grayhurst."

Jekyll produced the cigar-case, and proffered it without a word.

"You are very good," said Grayhurst; "I should have been sorry to lose it. It has traveled far with me; and one becomes attached to such a personal toy: especially when, as in this instance, there is the gift of a pleasant comrade to endear it."

So saying, he turned the silver box and touched the engraved inscription.

"Yes, I know," said Jekyll. "Naturally I must have seen that; and now that you mention it, I may confess that one of the names has challenged my interest and curiosity."

Here there was a brisk tap at the door. Grayhurst cried "Come in!" and Dolly entered, bringing the "toby" and the pipe.

"You see," said Grayhurst, "though not to the manner born, I take kindly to the customs of the country, and begin by making friends with toby and the churchwarden. But these are your old cronies, doubtless, and old cronies are sometimes tedious; perhaps you would prefer wine and a cigar."

"With your permission," said Jekyll, "I will

try a compromise—toby, for the pleasures of memory, and cigar, for the pleasures of hope. There is a fragrance as of Cuba in the air."

"Another toby, my dear," said the American, as he proffered the open box to his guest.

"Stop, Dolly!" cried Jekyll. "Mr. Grayhurst, watch this witch, and beware of her; she is uncanny; she puts potions in her tankards and philters in her taps; she has fatal charms for commercial travelers, and wicked spells for simple curates. She has conjured me in glass and clay and pewter, and she'll slowly sap your young life. If ever she squeezes your hand, scream for help and holy water."

"Oh! Oh! Mr. Jekyll, sir, if ever!—oh, for shame! and the gentleman a stranger. If you please, sir" (to Grayhurst) "this, this gentleman is—yes, sir, he is only—Devil Dick. There!"

And she bounced out—one part of shame and one of indignation to eight parts of flattered rapture; but she sent the toby by the errand-boy.

The men laughed merrily, and Jekyll said:

"That girl will amuse you; she is a study in the best type of British bar-maid: deep as a well and shallow as a saucer, cunning as a poacher and correct as a bishop's housekeeper; a handy bar-maid and an honest creature. But we were speaking of the cigar-case, and this name."

"Julian Shustoke? My chum in California, where, as you see, he gave me this for a keepsake.

But how does he interest you? Surely you cannot have met him? he was never in England."

"Met him? O! no! On the contrary, I am surprised to learn of the existence of a Shustoke out of England—even beyond the bounds of Midlandshire. The name is Saxon, and very old; and, as the patronymic of a family, is supposed to be unique. We have never heard of a Shustoke whom one of our three parishes could not claim—Yawdley or Overstoke or Wynhold."

"Then you are of that family?"

"By my mother, yes. She was a Miss Shustoke of Wynhold. By the by, we have a vague tradition that some Shustoke of Wynhold or Overstoke emigrated to America, early in the last century; but it is unsupported by any records, and is probably no more than an old wives' tale. I have supposed there was never a Shustoke born, married, or buried, but has left a name in these parish registers, and a local habitation in these old churchyards. Your California friend—he was not English?"

"Oh, no! Western American; of an old Maryland family originally—that is, old, as Maryland families are reckoned, say a century or so; and in that we found a bond of fellowship, for I too am of that State, and we Marylanders are famously clannish. But we did not need that circumstance to seal us as comrades, 'for love and luck.' It was a sportive touch of Californian nature that

made us kin. One day I was crossing the plaza in San Francisco (it was in Forty-nine), when an enterprising pioneer from the bar-room of the Parker House, overflowing with animal spirits and bad rum, took an ineffectual shot at me from behind, with his revolver,—‘for fun,’ he said. Being very drunk (as he afterward explained, lest we should imagine him a bad shot), he steadied himself, and prepared thoughtfully to take another pop; when, before I could discern which humorist was shooting at me, another humorist knocked him down, and pounded him on the head with his own pistol, until the affair displayed no further features of interest, except the damaged features of the prostrate pioneer. Then the playful agent of Providence jumped on his truck, and went off about his business. That was Julian Shustoke.”

“For an English rustic,” said Jekyll, “whose existence pendulates between the parish priest and the county magistrate, and whose most thrilling experiences are derived from an occasional funeral tempered by sheep-shearing, such an incident is inspiring.—But let me understand you. You say your friend Shustoke jumped upon—what was it?”

“His truck. He was driving a mule-truck.”

“Ah! then he was *not*—a gentleman?”

“The devil he was not! Why, my dear sir, I was working on a lighter myself, for ten dollars a day.”

And Jekyll, being an Englishman, and at his wits' end, said "Quite so!" and looked pensive.

Then came a modest tap at the door, and a girl entered; hesitated a moment as if surprised, embarrassed; then with a timid curtsy, murmuring "Please excuse me," would have retreated. But Grayhurst rose from his seat, and advancing a step, said "Don't go. Did you wish to see me? I am Mr. Grayhurst."

And as he stood, arrested in an attitude of instinctive courtesy, astonishment, admiration and delight were expressed in all the aspect of the man; for his gaze rested upon a wonder, and the wonder was in the beauty of the girl. Such beauty is not for intricate dexterities of description; rather is it for the heart of the beholder, for the imagination of the reader; not for the wordy weavings of the story-teller, who, if he be wise, will confess, in confronting the inexpressible, the limitations of his art, and forbear to beat the air. But that this girl (whose part in the drama to be enacted here will appeal to our generous emotions) may appear as a form of flesh and blood and not a misty phantasm, as a person and not a mere voice, I would fain trust my reader to construct for himself from the simplest elements the ideal Phyllis, who alone can be real to him.

Her age, twenty; her stature, not so tall as to be important, nor so short as to be trivial; her form, round without redundancy, and soft without

voluptuousness ; her feet and hands, large for a princess and small for a peasant ; her complexion, fair and blush-tinted :

“ Blushes that bin
The burnish of no sin ; ”

big brown eyes, habitually curtained under drooping lids, or raised for a moment in shy perplexity or appeal ; a glory of red-brown hair, the rare “ auburn ” of poets and painters, massed in rich shadows or shot with golden lights with every movement of the beautiful head ; lips, surpassingly lovely in curve and color, but too often pathetic and tremulous ; *item*, two brown eyebrows ; *item*, one white neck—and so on to the end of the imbecile inventory.

The American stood expectant, one hand on the back of a chair, the other unconsciously advanced, with the slight but gracious movement of courtly service. The Englishman sat in a posture of exaggerated indifference, his elbow planted on the table, his averted face supported on his hand, puffing tumultuous volumes of smoke, and watching his home-made cloud with the interest of infatuation.

The girl's curtsy was for Grayhurst ; her timid glance for Jekyll ; and the blush that mantled the matchless cheek,

“ A cheek where grows
More than a morning rose, ”

was for her own sweet foolish fear,

"My father bade me say—with his duty, sir—that the rooms are ready now, if you please. We have tried to make them pleasant, and father hopes you will find them so. I fear they are not yet so well-aired as they should be, but by to-morrow they will be quite sweet."

She paused, and Grayhurst said "Quite sweet!" There seemed to be nothing else to say; yet the fine young fellow blushed first, and then smiled foolishly. Again the girl glanced at Jekyll, the cloud-compelling; he was more rapt than ever.

"No doubt there will be something you would like changed, sir," she said. "If you will kindly let my father know your pleasure, we will try to do better."

Then she curtsied to Grayhurst, who bowed, but did not speak; and in the door, again she inclined the beautiful head, very slightly, and with eyes downcast—this time for the Englishman.

"So, Phyllis!" said Jekyll, moving and speaking abruptly, as if now for the first time aware of her presence. "Is Miss Lynn well?"

"Quite well, I thank you, Mr. Jekyll."

"And the squire, did he go to Ausibel to-day?"

"No, sir. He found it was not necessary. Kit Abershaw did go to fetch the new Durham heifer from Thornleigh; so the squire sent a letter by him."

"Has Miss Blythe called?"

"She had not when I left, sir; but Miss Lynn

did speak of going over to Brignal this afternoon. She may be there by now."

"Very well, Phyllis; my respects to Mr. Shustoke," and with a nod of dismissal he returned to his cloud.

At once the girl retired, pausing only for a moment, as if for Grayhurst's permission; and the American, who had remained standing, again bowed as she disappeared.

Grayhurst drew a long breath and sat down. Neither spoke for a few minutes. An influence stronger than the mere conventional requirements seemed to make the men forget that their acquaintance was an accident of the passing hour.

Then Jekyll, gazing fondly upon the pearl gray ash at the end of his cigar, inquired, "Is that the American manner?"

Grayhurst emerged from a brown study: "The American *manner*, did you say?"

"Pray pardon me; but do American gentlemen stand in the presence of their servants, and dismiss them with bows?"

"You have me there," said Grayhurst; "and I perceive that my 'manner' must appear as impossible to an Englishman as your question would be to an American. But do you really regard that girl as a servant?"

"Daughter of an inn-keeper, companion of a bar-maid; hair-dresser, stay-lacer, and pin-sticker in ordinary to a squire's niece; something higher

than a milkmaid, a little lower than a nursery governess."

"Mr. Jekyll," said Grayhurst, looking at his watch, "I find that it is just forty-two minutes since I first had the honor to exchange a word with you, and that is but short time in which to make up one's mind about a man; but I should be ashamed of myself if I could not discover, in half the time, that you have a taste for generous badinage. Yet even that were better than to be ashamed of *you*."

Jekyll started bolt upright, and stared at the man, who proceeded imperturbably to fill up his churchwarden. Then, abruptly seizing his hat, the Englishman approached the American, and extending his hand, said, "Good day, Grayhurst!"

Instantly the hands were gripped again, more significantly than before.

"Why do they call you Devil Dick?"

"I'll tell you when you come to my den at Wynhold."

And he was gone.

CHAPTER IV.

BRIGNAL.—LADY GOODLUCK.

MARTIN BLYTHE had been dead four years, and had left Brignal and all its belongings—bin, barn and byre—to his only child, Winifred, then in her eighteenth year. He had been widowed many years, and save his “bonnie lass,” as he delighted to call her, kith or kin had he none. A sterling home-spun character, to whom his neighbors were closely drawn in mutual good will and “friendly turns,” Martin belonged to an almost extinct class of small squires who farm their own land, a class formerly described as “little independent gentlemen of £300 a year, whom you shall know by their plain drab or plush coats with silver buttons, and their stout breeches and boots ;” men who rarely traveled farther than the county town, and then only for the assizes or an election ; men who dined once a week with the attorneys and justices, went to church regularly, studied their weekly journal, settled parochial disputes in the vestry, and then adjourned to the inn to discuss the state of the country over a comfortable tankard. The well-regulated constitutions

of these sturdy "little gentlemen" took kindly to ale and were content with that simple tipples; only at Christmas, and Guy Fawkes' day perhaps, were they moved to brew strong punch in generous bowls, garnished with toast and nutmeg. Then the family pack was produced from the corner-cupboard, and they played cards to the tune of "Martin said to his Man," or "The Vicar of Bray," sung by the company, with harmonious indifference to the exactions of harmony.

Of such as these was Martin Blythe, and his homestead was like unto him:—An ample structure of red brick, all overgrown with ivy and woodbine; large casemented bay-windows in the front and sides, and attic windows, sharply peaked, in the roof. The entrance was by a deep porch, embowered in honeysuckle and flanked with benches, where Martin had loved to bring his pipe in the long twilight and listen to his Winnie's artless prattle, lapped in his own content and lulled by the tinkle of the bickering burn. Overhead, supported by the porch, was a sweet snuggerly, sacred to Winifred, whither she came when her household tasks were done, to acquire good manners and correct conversation in the only fine society she knew—her small but gracious company of books. The eaves above were garrulous with swallows, and from the garden hives came the golden bee "ripened with fire," to take the honeysuckle with carnal violence

The porch overlooked a garden, a flowery colony, planted with knowledge and governed with love by the gentle proprietary, to whom that small province had been granted by her father when yet she was a very little girl; and hither came the footpath through the Hurst that left the bridge at the foot of Wynhold Hill and idly took the windings of the burn, dallying with daffodils and daisies on its homeward way to the little green wicket in a privet hedge which formed the outpost to Winifred's domain.

It was the peculiar charm of the Brignal house that it was held in the leafy arms of the Hurst, and nursed in fond seclusion. From the porch no road was to be seen, no means of access from the wrangling world without; the bosky lane, that afforded passage for vehicles from the high-road to the house, traversed by a long curve a copse of holly on the left, and ended in a plantation of lilacs and other flowering shrubs—still screened from end to end. On the right, the wanton stream of Giddyburn, as it "gloomed and glanced among its skimming swallows," and babbled as it ran, telling the story of its travels to the stones, disclosed itself only by the rare flashing of fine shafts of sunlight, that pierced its tent of frondage and startled the silvery waterbreaks "above its golden gravel."

Between the flower-beds and the burn, a great burst of Spring blossoms showed where the fruits

of the orchard and the garden had joined the several colors of their kinds in one opulent festival of promise:—the almond, flushing like a giant blush-rose among the snow-white petals of the plum; the deep carnation of the peach and nectarine, blended with the spotless honors of the cherry and the later loveliness of the apple.

And everywhere the birds, intrepid and jubilant; for Winifred Blythe was such a friend as Emerson desires, when he asks,—

“Hast thou named all the birds without a gun?
Loved the wood-rose, and left it on its stalk?”

Hither came the pert and pretty black-cap, to pour her tender love-song, not inferior in a certain plaintive inwardness to the Autumn song of the robin; the mysterious little grasshopper-lark, whispering among the hedgerows; the redstart, piping in the apple trees; the wren, with her golden crown, chirping in the kitchen garden, and boldly watching for seeds; the thrush, come back to his familiar birch to sing his sweet old English song. And ah! the nightingale, the tawny-throated—

“Hark! from that moonlit cedar what a burst!
What triumph!—hark, what pain!”

“Lord,” saith Master Walton, “what music hast Thou provided for thy saints in heaven, when Thou affordest bad men such melody on earth!”

And this paradise without was justly fitted to

the peace within, for Brignal was but another name for home. Winifred was proud of its traditions, and her household altar burned as of yore for the household gods of her grandsire. In the wide hall fitches still hung from the stout beams, and guns and angling gear still shared the place of honor, over the mantel-piece, with their valiant seniors, the broadswords, pikes and dirks; for the Blythes had done good yeoman-service in their time. By the fireside, the big arm-chair with a cushion still reposed, and fondly cronied with two venerable settles within the chimney corner. Here, at Christmas, Martin had hobnob'd with his tenants, before a roaring blaze, while tale and song and jug went round. Fox's Book of Martyrs kept its place in the window, along with the Complete Justice, Pilgrim's Progress, and Worthies of Midlandshire; and on the wall, printed large, and set in a carved frame, hung Martin's favorite poem, from his father's favorite poet, Herrick:—beginning,

“ Sweet country life ! to such unknown
Whose lives are others', not their own ;
But serving courts and cities, be
Less happy, less enjoying thee.

* * * * *

And so too in the family-room, all was kept as in Martin's time, safe from profane intrusions of improvement; and the homely things of furniture or ornament, that time and use and love had endeared to him, had naught of change to fear

from the reverent and tender touches of his winsome and pious child, who, as she moved among them with her careful broom, gave a tear to the desk and a kiss to the picture, "making the action fine."

But if in this plainer part of the house Winifred had been but a viceroy or a regent, in the parlor, and in the alcove over the porch, she had her proper kingdom; and the tokens of her sovereignty were to be seen in the finer and more feminine equipments there, in the lightness and the softness and the grace, in cunning revelations of form and texture and color, in books that revealed her mind, and pictures that denoted her sympathies, and devices of decoration that expressed her taste and fancy—in the prettiness of useful things and the usefulness of pretty things.

When Martin Blythe lay dying, he called to his bedside his lifelong friend, the Squire; and Simon Dudder, his right-hand man, to whom every furrow in the farm was as a wrinkle in his own face, and every stroke of a sickle as the sweat thereof; and Judith Welcome, such a nurse as the mothers of Israel delighted to honor, such a nurse as Naomi was aforetime to the babe that Ruth bore unto Boaz; for, like her, Judith had carried that child in her bosom—"Ay, hinnie! an' th' mother afore thee," she would say proudly.

And these four took loving counsel together touching the fortunes of Winifred, as to what should be done for her; and it was agreed among them that the bird should not be parted from the nest. The Squire would be her earthly providence, to guard and guide her; and Simon would hold the farm in hand, with a thrifty grip, that Brignal corn and Brignal wool might keep the top of the market; and Judith said, "Trusten me, maister; I'll be fain to cumber for the child while these old bones keep movin'. Thee knows there's nowt but love twixt my bonnie and me; and my whoam's wi' her till I mak' my last bed."

So Winifred bided at Brignal, going only to Overstoke, to be trained by Barbara's teachers; and Simon and Judith were with her; thus in all respects the current of her life flowed in peace and pleasantness, not the less sweet for many tender thoughts and furtive tears, sacred to the memory of him who slept in Overstoke churchyard. And the farmer's daughter was ennobled by the grace of God, expressed in the love and thankfulness of three parishes; and henceforth she was "Lady Goodluck" in every thatched cottage and hedger's hut.

"'Twixt the gloamin' and the mirk, when the kye come hame," lowing fondly as they trail across the field, and marching to the music of the ploughboy's whistle,—when the bat and the owl were abroad, flitting through the glimmering

quiet, and even the low whisper of woodland springs was heard, as they trickled through their leafy channels—in the gloaming, “Lady Goodluck” sat in the porch and talked to Mutzie, an engaging small creature, whose entertaining qualities were not seriously impaired by the natural impediments of four legs and a tail, seeing that with the legs she contrived to transact much small business, and with the tail to express pathos, cajolment, caprice or waggery. A silvery-silken skye, with a steel-blue streak in her back, and tawny tips to her ears, Mutzie had been a gift from Dick Jekyll, when as yet she was but a limp and impotent pup. Reared in the confidence of Winifred, and shrewdly conscious of her ladyship’s weaknesses and ways, accustomed to be addressed in the language of reason, and never to be belittled in her own esteem by baby-talk or dog-jargon, the creature was an encouraging example of development of mind and formation of character.

Mutzie was fond of music, but not indiscriminately, being quick to discern good from evil, and preferring the vocal. She knew all of Winifred’s songs, and heartily detested several of them—such as “We met; ’twas in a Crowd,” “Off, off! said the Stranger,” and other popular inanities of that period, wherewith her mistress in dreadful sport was wont to make her howl. But she had her compensations of rapture, lying thus in her lady’s

lap, in the porch in the long twilight, listening to the small confidences that were for her ear only, and to the cheerful ditties that she preferred: "There was a jolly Miller once Lived on the river Dee," and "Aye Waukin' O."

"Feather beds are soft,
Painted rooms are bonnie;
But a kiss o' my dear love
Is better far than ony.
Aye waukin' O,
Waukin' aye, and weary;
Sleep I can get nane,
For thinkin' o' my dearie."

"Judy, dear, are you there?"

"Ay, hinnie!—just haudin' mysen still, to let th' rest and thankfulness soak in."

Within the family-room, before the lamp was lighted, the reverend dame sat at the window in the deep shadow of the vine, and brooded, gathering her days together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings. Her Bible lay in her lap, and her spectacles on the Bible.

"And well soaked you must be, and running over at the eyes; for I know you are crying, you moist old thing!"

"Happen I be, child, happen I be; but 'tis e'en for th' comfort o't. 'Tears and prayers are Memory's heirs,' thee'st know."

"Yes, dear; I know. There's a kiss for you—catch it. And I'll send for that bad boy of yours

to bring you some of his, the wild kind that you like best."

"Ah! the bonnie lad! Thee munna call him bad, child, tho' 'tis nobbut thy pretty way. The wild kind be the sweetest—honey or human hearts. 'Tis th' owd eyes, th' eyes o' a owd woman that ha' suckled boys and buried 'em, that sees deepest and keenest into th' insides o' a young man. But what's come to Maister Dick? 'Tis days an' days, an' no sight nor soun' o' him. Yon's na the lad to bide away for nowt from them that loves him. What dosto think? I doubt he's gone tearin'."

"Oh, no! have you not heard? Did not Christie Breme tell you? She was at the inn yesterday. Dick has found an object of interest: a stranger, who has come to The Chequers to remain for a time—for what, I should like to know? 'A gentleman,' says Hindman, because he has taken the best rooms; 'handsome and superior,' says Dolly, who thinks she knows, being worldly-wise; 'a man,' says Dick, 'with a head full of news and a heart full of pluck—a Man, and not a mere thing with boxes.' Christie brought me a note from him. The Man is an American, and Dick would like to bring him here."

"Oh, but mysen, I'd be main joyful to see him! An American, ye sayn?"

"An American—from California, where the ground is gold, you know. But Judy dear, what can he be to you?"

“Dost na see, child? If he’s American, happen he may know our folks, o’ somehows.”

“Our folks? I do not understand. We Blythes have no kin in America, that ever I heard.”

“Shustokes, child, Shustokes! Hanna I kept in my poor yed what my grannie used to tell when I was but a bit lass? as how, in owd Squire Rupert’s time, a Shustoke of Wynhold took shipping and sailed the high seas, he and the rest o’ th’ brisk young bloods, for America,—to fight the red men, my grannie said, and tak’ their lands. And in Squire Ralph’s time, (that was the third high-sheriff, thee’st know,) cam’ tidings o’ rich Shustokes in they parts—fine gentlemen and leddies, with proper sons and da’ters. Ay! I’m told ’tis a throng place now; but it canna be so crowdy niver but the Shustokes mun mak’ theirs heard and seen—such a rare owd stock and comely! I doubt Maister Dick’s new friend will be knowin’ a Shustoke, wheriver he may see one—so main handy as they be, they Americans.”

CHAPTER V.

STRAY LINKS.

BETWEEN Grayhurst and Jekyll mutual prepossession had become mutual attraction, and since their first interview at The Chequers the men had been much together. The hospitable attentions of the generous young Englishman were accepted by the American with hearty frankness, but without fuss. Together, in the saddle, they had made the circuit of the three parishes—Jekyll an entertaining but audacious guide, and Grayhurst an eager and amused observer.

Returning from one of these excursions, by the bridle-path that traversed Flecknoe Park, between the castle and the highway, the friends had fallen a-thinking, and for a while walked their horses in silence, each busy with conjectures suggested by his interest in the other; when Jekyll abruptly broke the spell with a question whose very bluntness was its own excuse, for there was the soul of good-will in the ring of it:

“Grayhurst, what brought you here?”

The American laughed: “Steam, horse-power, and a hobby.”

“Good Lord!” exclaimed Jekyll—“from a life of explosive surprises, to a coma of monotony; from a crowd, where the oldest thing is yesterday’s newspaper, to a cloister, where the newest thing is a new-laid egg.”

“That is only a clever definition for my hobby, which is a steadfast faith in the extremes of change, as an intellectual and moral alterative: for instance, from the war-whoop to the shepherd’s pipe; from gristly steaks at a dollar a pound, to a new-laid egg for a ha’penny. And *vice versa* for such cases as yours; you should start for California.”

“I will. I might escape by swimming some dark and stormy night. You asked why I am called Devil Dick; because I have made myself a terror to the whole country-side, just to keep awake; and often I am tempted to set fire to Wynhold Chapel, to try ‘how it would seem’ as you say. Whom did *you* murder? Excuse my mentioning it; and don’t mind me, for I have slain many ‘in a figure’—mostly parsons and dowagers. You do not look tragic, or even sinister, but I have no better theory to account for your taking sanctuary in a road-side hostelry, between a toll-gate and a churchyard.”

The American, drawing from his pocket a small note-book, waited for a full stop in Jekyll’s banter, and then read:

“Randal Marmaduke Shustoke, Esq., is a mag-

istrate for Midlandshire, and Lord of the Manor of Overstoke, near Yawdley. Resides at Overstoke House. The lands of Overstoke were awarded at the Conquest "——

"You are a queer fellow, Grayhurst," Jekyll interrupted. "What is all that stuff to you? and how did you come by it? Probably from some book-making Paul Pry, who 'hopes he don't intrude' in County Families."

"If it had been my blessed birthright and boon," said Grayhurst, "to first see the light in this tight little island, I should be sure to respond to your happy conjecture with the regular 'quite so!'. Do you remember telling me, in our first talk at The Chequers, of some Shustoke of Wynhold or Overstoke who is supposed to have emigrated to America early in the last century?"

Jekyll assented with a nod, and became attentive.

"But you were inclined to reject the story, as a vague tradition and 'an old wives' tale,'" continued the American.

"Why not? I said there were no records."

"Indeed! what better record would you have than an old wives' tale? I have a pretty taste for this line of history, and when I was a boy I loved to climb our family-tree."

"It was a childish ignorance," said Jekyll, "but now 'tis little joy, to know you are farther off from heaven than when you were a boy."

“ Perhaps ; but it is something to have found and held fast a faith in old wives’ tales. Old wives are the only trusty, because the only loving and jealous chroniclers ; the tales which they make their business they take to their bosoms ; they are intimate pursuivants, and heralds in homespun ; they proclaim with cupboard drums and nursery trumpets matters that should be hushed up in the family. A whisper transmitted through many generations of old wives becomes history, of import as awful as a blast from the Recording Angel.”

“ All very fine, my boy ; but your sketch suggests horrible possibilities. For example, that at the call of the Last Trump all the old wives in England may arise in a body, and immediately begin to tell all they know. Why, the innumerable multitude of aristocracy and gentry will with one consent retire shuddering to their holes. But where did you acquire your profound knowledge of the subject ? Surely, with your new social machinery, you do not produce old wives in America.”

“ Abundantly ; and we are indebted to them for all that we have of genealogy, and that peculiar system of arboriculture which applies itself to the rearing of family-trees. When Julian Shustoke had long delved and grubbed in vain among his meagre archives in Maryland for some traces of his English progenitors, it was a venerable gossip, I am told, who uncovered for him the

root of the matter, which had long lain hidden (where old wives usually keep such things), between the leaves of a ghostly Bible. Here it is, as I took it down from Julian's memory;" and turning the leaves of his note-book, Grayhurst read:

"Randal Shustoke of Overstoke, Yawdley, married Mary, daughter of Geoffrey Meriden of Yawdley, who died about the year 1640."

"In the name of all the Kings-at-arms!" exclaimed Jekyll. "Why then there must have been——"

"Another old wives' tale? Yes; your American namesakes have long had one, more definite than yours, and accepted with more becoming reverence. They say,—which is our favorite formula for dodging the responsibility in meddling vaguely with our neighbors' concerns—'they do say' that in the year 1715 one Richard Shustoke of Wynhold founded a family in Maryland, which has since had important ramifications, has produced several personages more or less useful to their descendants, and barring an occasional prodigal, scapegrace or——"

"Devil Dick," suggested Jekyll; "no good old family is complete without a Devil Dick."

The American turned upon his companion with a startled, inquisitive glance.

"What's the matter?" said Jekyll. "Do you object to the D. D.?"

"By no means. You remind me that there *was* a clergyman, that's all."

Jekyll shouted with laughter; then said, "But I beg your pardon; you were apologizing for the usual incorrigibles."

"Yes, I was about to remark that, with the exception of one or two of those exciting but attractive erratics, the Shustokes of Maryland have been all right, from the original Richard to the latter Julian."

"And where is your Julian now?"

"In San Francisco probably, where I left him six months since. You see, I had feebly failed to adjust my pampered frame to the salutary rigidities of soft planks, and had conceived a longing for the more plastic embraces of a feather bed; so I put three water-lots, an iron warehouse and a steamboat, in my pocket, and sailed for England, by way of Honolulu and Hong-Kong, Singapore and Bombay. In parting from my friend at the ship's gangway, I promised him that if ever I set foot in Merrie England I would straightway go a Shustoke-hunting; and straightway I forgot, of course. One day, as I sat in the 'commercial' room of my hotel in London, wondering what I should do next—heads Paris, tails Killarney, you know—my hand fell heedlessly upon a book, a most forlorn, deject and wretched book. It was Somebody's "County Families of the United Kingdom;" and as I idly turned the leaves my

eye fell upon the word *Shustoke*—‘Randal Marmaduke Shustoke,’ and the rest as I have copied it here. Then I remembered Julian, and my promise, and here I am.”

“Naturally,” said Jekyll; “but what a startling chance!”

“Startling enough, but no ‘chance’; the word may be handy for such occasions, but the thing does not exist.”

“What do you mean? That the circumstance was supernaturally arranged?”

“Possibly. Certainly that I was booked for this station, and appointed to this business, before I was born.”

“How am I to take that? As a bee in your personal bonnet; or as an expression of the national mind? Is the average Yankee a complacent mystic?”

“Say rather, the most logically sentimental, the most practically romantic, of the children of men. I have known an American adventurer to waste more poetry in his game of life than would suffice to equip an English laureate and set him up for the peerage here and the abbey hereafter.”

“Grayhurst, you are a boon. Whether freak or fatalism brought you hither is nothing to me; all the same, I embrace you as a boon; for I discover in you important possibilities of fun. Hereabouts there are dry bones to stir; and we will begin with the Vicar.”

“Who is the Vicar?”

“Our beneficed jester, who once a week rattles husks in a sermon, as of old an honest fool rattled beans in a bladder. But you shall see.”

“The Mr. Thorpe, I suppose,” said Grayhurst, “of whom I have heard at The Chequers.”

“The Reverend Caryl Ethelred Thorpe: that is his imposing patronymic. And if you have heard his name at the inn, it was probably coupled with that of Miss Lynn, the Squire’s niece, and remotely a cousin of mine—an enigmatical damsel, always interesting, often agreeable, and sometimes (deliberately) neither—who seems to have assigned herself to this praying-mantis in a perfunctory, this-sort-of-thing-you-know fashion, only possible to an English girl who hath a devil.”

“A serious engagement, do you mean?”

“I have never observed any playful features.”

“Ah! I see. But these are family matters, and you seem to be taking me into your confidence.”

“As you like,” said Jekyll.

“I do not object; it is your affair. But to this match you do object. Are you disinterested?”

“In the sentimental sense? Oh, yes!” said Jekyll, and his laugh was genuine. “But on the score of compatibility, you know.”

“So prudent? I should not have imagined that; but very proper no doubt. Is the young lady under any mysterious pressure?”

"Barbara? Not she. The dear old Squire would decline with thanks a lord-chancellor or a field-marshal, if Bab objected to the shade of his wig."

"A spell perhaps—something in the supernatural line—mesmerism, electro-biology, fascination—eh?"

"So likely! Come with me to Overstoke tomorrow, and you shall see the pair together. After that you shall tell me how long it would probably take the stone cat on a lodge-gate to charm a live bullfinch in the hedge."

"And you would introduce me at Overstoke? By whose leave?"

"Your own—what more?"

"A stranger of the deepest dye, without letters of introduction!"

"Tickets for soup? No, thanks! The traditions of Overstoke are superior to those perfidious parallelograms. For three hundred years and longer the hospitality of the Shustokes has had a mind and a heart of its own, and has taken the consequences. If ever you knew an American Shustoke, with an honest hankering for his breed in Midlandshire, you shall be as welcome to Squire Randal as the flowers of May. In fact, those proverbial vegetables would probably feel slighted, in comparing their reception with yours."

"All right!" said the American.

CHAPTER VI.

THE AMERICAN AT OVERSTOKE.

WHEN Jekyll promised Grayhurst a cordial welcome at Overstoke, he had not reckoned without his host. No one knew better than he the generous and genial nature of the Squire, and the large liberty of his hospitality, his handsome and gracious assertion of a family pride conspicuous by its very simplicity, scorning ostentation, and superior to any patronage save kindness—a pride to which arrogance was as impossible as servility. Once, when the reverend prig whose acquaintance we shall make presently ventured to remonstrate with him on the score of his indulgent rule in his household, saying “At times I fear, my dear sir, that you quite forget what is due to yourself,” the Squire replied with a cunning twinkle in his eye, “I hope I generally do, Caryl. Perhaps that is why no one else ever forgets what is due to me.”

In the American, the Squire found a double charm: the fascination of a new type, disclosing a startling and formidable development of civilization; and the confirmation of an old faith and

fealty, by the revelation of transplanted scions of an ancient and honorable stock. As Grayhurst, exhilarated by the eager curiosity of his audience, kept his shuttlecock of talk flying between these two themes, the imagination of the Squire was tossed in a turmoil of astonishment, admiration, amusement and consternation ; and his interest as a county magistrate in the summary exploits of a Vigilance Committee was abruptly displaced by his sense of humor in contemplating, as the head of a decorous old family, the spectacle of a Shustoke engaged in the manipulation of mules.

When the talk returned to England and Overstoke, Barbara, who had been a silent but rapt listener, took the American's arm, with a movement of demure friendliness, and led him from the Library to the piazza, to explain the situation of the manor, and to entertain him with such points of interest as were to be seen from the house.

Then the Squire heartily thanked his young kinsman for bringing the stranger to Overstoke :

"A suprising fellow, Dick! A stirring fellow! romantic and practical, pathetic and droll, and always picturesque. Plainly a gentleman, too; I think he will do us credit."

"As to that," said Jekyll, "I dare say he would spurn our conventional conception of a gentleman. For example, Thorpe is a gentleman—by courtesy. I am a gentleman—so described technically by my solicitor. You are a gentleman

—by the grace of God. The rest are all Thorpes or Jekylls. But I doubt if this American ever stops to think whether he is the one or the other. I doubt if he would find it worth his while to knock down a cad for calling him ‘no gentleman.’ The man is just a Man, superlatively developed; and if that is an ordinary product of the soil and air and diet of ‘the diggins’—if I can learn manners from the muzzle of a six-shooter, and respect for the rights of others from a deck of cards—for heaven’s sake, Squire, ship me for California with a pick-axe and your prayers.”

But when Barbara had decoyed Grayhurst beyond the hall-door, she dropped the subject they had left behind them in the Library, and did not take up the subject that had brought them to the piazza. It was not for the topography of Overstoke that she had contrived her small exploit of artifice.

“Let us leave those two,” she said, “in California, whither you can spirit them at your pleasure. When we want them, I can call them back with an old song. But I belong *here*, among these cows and sheep, and other peasantry; and I shall be pleased to introduce you to my set.”

“And why not? since I have come so far to find you, and all that you stand for—your idyls and your ditties and your country charms. We young Grayhursts had a nurse who was rich in them, and I was her heir:

“ Burnie bee, burnie bee !
Tell me when your wedding be.
If it be to-morrow day,
Take your wings and fly away.

“ You see I know them——

“ Lady bird, lady bird ! fly away home ;
Thy house is a-fire, thy children all roam :
All but little Nan, that sits in her pan,
Weaving gold laces as fast as she can.”

“ Do you know the Mulberry Bush ? ”

“ What ! not ‘ Here we go round ’—So ? ” and taking his hands, the girl circled with him playfully, as they chanted together :

“ Here we go round the mulberry bush,
The mulberry bush, the mulberry bush ;
Here we go round the mulberry bush,
So early in the morning.”

“ This is delightful,” said Grayhurst ; “ once more, please. It is so long since I have seen it done in primitive style. You see we Forty-niners had not the scenery or the music or——”

“ Or the surprising dramatic powers of Miss Lynn, I dare say. Quite a revelation of artlessness and grace ! My intrusion is unfortunate. Shall I find your uncle in the Library, Barbara ? ”

“ I think so.”

“ May I have your company ? ”

“ I have company.”

And the performers of the Mulberry Bush stood holding each other's hand, and regarding—she with

defiance, he with amusement—the man who had spoiled their pretty childish sport, coming upon them without warning, from some side-entrance : a detestably good-looking person, whose supercilious respectability, and faultless impertinence of attitude and tone, at once commended him to the interest of any gentleman who had ever played at foot-ball. As he turned to retire, he met the American's glance of good-humor with the "stony stare" which is in the British Code for such occasions ; and yet he paused, as if expecting an introduction ; but Barbara's regard at that moment was directed to the distant landscape, her aspect was sublimely inane ; so the stony stare dissolved in space, as the inflexible form retreated.

Then to Grayhurst's questioning smile the girl responded :

"That's our vicar, the Reverend Caryl Thorpe."

"So I imagined. I had heard of him."

"Indeed ! From whom ?"

The American hesitated.

"From Dick ? Mr. Jekyll, perhaps ?"

"Probably ; in fact it was Jekyll. He spoke of the beauty of Overstoke church, and naturally mentioned the Vicar. Oxford man, I believe."

"Oh !" and Barbara laughed, thoughtfully. "Yes, Dick does admire the church. But shall we rejoin them in the Library ? You must be introduced to Mr. Thorpe."

"Must I ?"

The girl stared ; " Surely not, Mr. Grayhurst, if you object."

" Not I ; only too happy. But you ? I fancied the objection was on your side, since you debarred me from that cordial greeting which the Vicar seemed so eager to bestow."

Barbara winced and looked troubled, then brightened as she interpreted the smile of her companion :

" Ah ! you are teasing," she said. " Caryl was not eligible for introduction at that juncture. Besides, I was unwilling to encroach upon the dear Squire's domain ; in this old-fashioned house it is his privilege to distribute the peculiar honors ; and he is never more stately than when impressing the Vicar with a sense of the honor conferred upon him."

Grayhurst permitted the veiled flattery to pass without recognition ; but as they moved toward the Library he made a mental note of it : " Adroit and courtly ! This girl has cleverness and character ; and she sharpens her wits on her intimate enemy. A case of pedigree : somebody has eaten sour grapes, and the teeth of My Lady are set on edge."

As they entered the room, sounds of animated discussion, audible a moment before, suddenly ceased, and an awkward silence befell. But the Squire and Jekyll rose to receive them, while the Vicar, who had been standing near the door, re-

treated a step or two, with a certain air of careful carelessness. It was plain that the Squire had not been informed of the encounter in the piazza.

"Well, sir!" he said, "I trust the outlook pleased you. It is true Midland landscape that we have here; tame enough to traveled eyes, I imagine, but not without a charm of its own, which familiarity will disclose to you—a charm expressly English."

"And one," said Grayhurst, "that the vexed American is peculiarly prepared to enjoy—the charm of rest."

"It is gratifying to learn that its tameness is not shocking," said Thorpe, sententiously.

"Ah! Thorpe," said the Squire, "let me present you to Mr. Grayhurst, Richard's friend—and mine."

Thorpe had heard of the American, of "Jekyll's infatuation and Shustoke's weakness," and his comprehensive disapproval was expressed in his salutation, if that term may be applied to the rigid flexure of his spinal hinge.

"Thorpe is our vicar; he scolds us all the week, and cajoles us on Sunday. We are apt to forget what a pleasant fellow the Vicar can be, until we face him from the pews. Then we are conscious of——"

"The charm of rest," said Jekyll.

"True!" said Thorpe, "it is my privilege to

administer to Mr. Jekyll, once a week, the relief of nature's sweet restorer for his notorious and incorrigible insomnia."

Dullness was not one of the Vicar's weak points, and this allusion (unintelligible to Grayhurst) to certain nocturnal escapades of Devil Dick, was merrily applauded by that bold delinquent.

"I have read," said Grayhurst, "of a graceless youth who slept while Paul was preaching. There may be consolation for the Vicar in the reflection that that other young fellow broke his neck; although it has struck me as rather hard on the lad, seeing that Paul, by his own confession, was 'long preaching.'"

"Have done with your nonsense, you boys!" the Squire interposed, "I am interested in Mr. Grayhurst's remark, that the repose of our English landscape has peculiar attractions for Americans—least expected, and yet most natural, I imagine, to a striving, impatient people, to whom rest must be a costly luxury. But the thought is not new to me; I have read Washington Irving."

"Prince of intellectual loafers!" said Grayhurst.

"Beg pardon!" (from the Vicar); "I did not catch the word."

"Loafer, Mr. Thorpe; the verb is 'to loaf,' a vocable we invented to express one of the blandishments of life—to escape from the racket into the rest—something akin to 'dawdle,' but nobler."

Barbara laughed : "Is it my native tongue that I hear?"

"And are these," said Jekyll, "the emotions and aspirations of the gentle filibuster? Now, from our more mundane point of view the repose of our English landscape does not present itself in a light so rosy. There are times when it may be said to bore us—when by the long contemplation of it we are wrought to moody madness, and would find relief in crime."

"Oh! let him rave, Mr. Grayhurst," said Barbara; "I understand you. It was not the Californian's idea of repose that Lucy Ashton sang of:

"Look thou not on Beauty's charming;
Sit thou still when kings are arming;
Taste not when the wine-cup glistens;
Speak not when the people listens;
Stop thine ear against the singer;
From the red gold keep thy finger.
Vacant heart and hand and eye
Easy live and quiet die."

And as she delivered the lines in low tones, only the American detected the tremor in her voice and the flash in her eyes.

Jekyll made an impatient movement. "Barbara," said he, "I think you find a fiendish joy in those exasperating couplets. I hate them; they make a man feel like a goose-girl or a lap-dog."

Grayhurst, who had not withdrawn his gaze from the face of the girl, now thought he dis-

covered a look of trouble there. She clasped her hands, her lips trembled and were parted, and she moved a step toward Jekyll, but held her peace. The American remembered Jekyll's enigmatical phrase in Flecknoe Park, "an English girl who hath a devil." Then he glanced at the Vicar, who was apparently unconscious at that moment of aught in this life more worthy of a moralist's contemplation than the superlative propriety of a well-trained butler's style; for Keyes had entered, bearing decanters.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SQUIRE'S PSALM.—AT THE LODGE.

‘, **N**OW, Mr. Grayhurst,” said the Squire, “we will pledge you an Overstoke welcome, and my Bab shall celebrate the occasion with a song.”

“Presently,” said Barbara; “I know my place. This is the Squire’s hour, Mr. Grayhurst, and *Vinum Letificat* is his noble psalm for great occasions. Insist upon *Vinum Letificat*; and if he pretends he cannot sing, appeal to me.”

“A most ancient song, sir,” said the Squire; “a song so old that even an old man’s cracked pipe cannot spoil it. So:—

“There is no tree that grow
On earth, that I do know,
More worthy praise, I trow,
Than is the Vine.
Whose grapes, as ye may rede,
Their liquor forth do shede,
Whereof is made, indeed,
All our good wine.
And Wine, ye may trust me,

Causeth men for to be
 Merrie, for so ye see
 His nature is.
 Then put aside all wrath,
 For David showed us hath,
Vinum letificat
Cor Hominis.

“How bring ye that to pass?
Cordis Jucunditas
 Is now and ever was
 The life of man.
 Since that Mirth hath no peer,
 Then let us make good cheer,
 And be ye merrie here,
 Whiles that ye can.
 And drink well of this wine,
 Whiles it is good and fine,
 And show some outward sign
 Of joy and bliss.
 Expel from you all wrath,
 For David showed us hath,
Vinum letificat
Cor Hominis.”

The American, who had already been strangely taken by the sober and respectful demeanor of the others, now wondered to see Barbara take from the salver a morsel of bread, and lay it before the Squire, who let fall upon it a few drops of wine; and then sang on :

“Now ye that be present,
 Praise God Omnipotent,

That hath us given and sent
 Our daily food.
 When thorow sin we're slaine,
 He sent His Son againe,
 Us to redeem from paine
 By His sweet blood.
 And He is the true Vine,
 From whom distilled the wine
 That bought your souls and mine—
 Ye know well this.
 Then put aside all wrath ;
 For David showed us hath,
Vinum letificat
Cor Hominis."

'Twas a quaintly sweet performance, impressive by its very simplicity. At the close, Grayhurst remained silent.

"I knew you would like it," said Barbara.

"But he has not said so, my dear."

"No, uncle ; if he had, we might not be so sure of his liking ; any one might 'say so.'"

"Thank you !" said Grayhurst, simply. "How did you come by this rare old chant?"

"My great-grandfather, Rupert, found it in a Cotton MS., and made the air for it. His son, Marmaduke, transmitted it through my father to me ; and so it has been set up in the Shustoke ritual. We call it the 'Squire's Psalm.'"

"But of what does it remind me?" said Grayhurst. "Ah ! I remember. Erskine's Song of Tobacco :

“Was this small plant for thee cut down?
 So was the plant of Great Renown,
 Which Mercy sends
 For nobler ends:
 Thus think, and smoke tobacco.

“Doth juice medicinal proceed
 From such a naughty foreign weed?
 Then what's the power
 Of Jesse's flower?
 Thus think, and smoke tobacco.

“They fit well together, but I like best the Squire's Psalm. The other is ingenious; this is ingenuous; the other is artificial, this is artless.”

THORPE (*aside to Jekyll*): “Good criticism, for a Yankee.”

JEKYLL (*aside to Thorpe*): “Bad manners, for a vicar.” And perceiving that Grayhurst had detected or suspected this by-play, he continued, “Thorpe objects to the vintner trespassing on the vicar's ground.”

“When the publican begins to preach,” said Thorpe—

“The pharisee may begin to throw stones,” said Jekyll.

“Barbara, give us ‘Tibbie Towler,’ please.”

“But Caryl disapproves. He calls it a barmaid's lilt.”

“Now what an unreasonable kill-joy you are, Thorpe!—such a nice spiteful song. Squire, what's your opinion of ‘Tibbie Towler?’ ”

“Capital song, capital! Rich in the pungent Scotch humor.”

“Conflict of Church and State!” said Jekyll—
“the justice against the vicar. Let this free
citizen of the world decide. Sing it for Grayhurst,
Barbara. Shall I fetch the harp?”

“Bar-maid and harp? Oh, no! That would
spoil both. You may whistle, if you like.”

And without moving from her place, she sang
with a pretty reluctant pertness:

Allegro.

Tib-bie 'Tow-ler o' the glen, There's ower mon-y
woo-in' at her; Tibbie Towler o' the glen, There's
ower mon-y woo-in' at her. Woo-in' at her,
pu'-in' at her, Courtin' at her, can-na get her.
Sil-ly elf, it's for her pelf, That a' the lads are
woo-in' at her.

“ Ten cam east, and ten cam west ;
Ten cam rowin' o'er the water ;
Twa cam down the lang dyke-side—
There's twa and thretty wooin' at her.
Wooin' at her, etc.

“ There's seven butt, and seven ben,
Seven in the pantry wi' her,
Twenty head about the door,—
There's ane-and-forty wooin' at her.

“ She sits a queen amang them a' ;
Ilka chiel expects to get her.
Gin she but let her thimble fa',
The're like to knock their heads together.

“ She's got pendles in her lugs—
Cockle shells wad suit her better ;
High heel'd shoon and siller tags ;
And a' the lads are wooin' at her.

“ Be a lassie ne'er sae black,
Gin she hae the name o' siller,
Set her up on Tintock tap,
The wind will blaw a husband till her.

“ Be a lassie ne'er sae fair,
Gin she want the penny siller,
A flie may fell her in the air,
Before a man be even'd till her.
Wooin' at her, etc.”

“ A flie may fell her in the air,” repeated Gray-hurst. “ Ah, but that's droll ! So racy of the true Scotch flavor—as good as the ‘Auld Wife:’

“The maut’s aboon the meal the night,
Wi’ some.”

But at last he must take his leave. “The foot of time falls lightly at Overstoke,” he said to Barbara.

“At least we are magnanimous; for at the risk of making Overstoke jealous of Brignal, we have commended you to the charming mistress of the farm. The Squire sends all his choicest sheep to our Winifred, and she sends all her naughty goats to him—which is a parable that you can interpret for yourself when the fame of Miss Blythe has reached you.”

Jekyll and Thorpe were ready to accompany Grayhurst, at least as far as the lodge; and the three took the avenue together.

It was a silent walk, relieved only by an occasional remark, without cordiality and well-nigh without interest; for hostile influences were at work, the inevitable antagonism of an ignoble egotism on the one hand and a generous alliance on the other.

In single file, following the foot-path, where the view was barred by the colonnade of oaks, they caught but broken glimpses of the vista of the drive to its termination at the lodge; and it was not until they had advanced so far as to bring the great gate into full view that they observed two persons standing, half-screened by the shrubbery, between the gate and the lodge—a man, who

talked vehemently, with clumsy gesticulation, and a woman, who listened intently, without speech or motion. Then, startled by the sound of steps approaching, they parted hastily, the man retreating toward the lodge, the woman advancing in the carriage-way, on the side nearest the three gentlemen—Phyllis Hindman, the innkeeper's beautiful daughter. She was pale now; and as she made her pretty rustic curtsy, with a simple grace that was all her own, she turned upon Jekyll that sudden large-eyed look, half questioning, half-appealing, which Grayhurst had detected when he first met her at the inn. Now, although the American observed her narrowly, he made no sign of recognition. Jekyll too would have passed her with his careless "So, Phyllis!" but the Vicar had neither the delicacy of the one nor the indifference of the other:—

"You have been to The Chequers, I suppose."

"Yes, sir,—with a message to my father."

"From Mr. Shustoke?"

"From Mrs. Pennyweight, if you please, sir."

"Ah! Perhaps the house-keeper would choose some other messenger, if she knew that you loitered on the way to gossip with men. I suppose your business did not concern Abershaw."

The girl stared:

"If you please, sir, I do not understand."

Here Jekyll broke in:

“And who the devil could? What stuff is this? Phyllis, go on to the house!”

Although instantly obeying, without another word, and with no abatement of her respectful demeanor, the girl, as she turned to go, smiled furtively—a smile of grateful relief, rather than amusement.

She was hardly out of hearing before Jekyll turned upon the Vicar, speaking low, as Grayhurst walked on.

“I suppose that sort of thing is professional, Thorpe, and quite in the pastoral line; but it strikes me as in beastly bad taste just now. I think you might reserve it for the back-shop at the Manse—if you must peck at such a poor little barn-door fowl as Barbara’s maid. Try Winifred; she would make sport for some of us, if not for you.”

No retort from the other, who came on in sullen silence to the gate, where Grayhurst waited for them; there the Vicar coldly touched his hat to the American, and without a word departed, taking the highway to the Manse.

“And that man,” said Jekyll, thoughtfully contemplating the retiring figure, “is supposed to have been at one time a bright and beautiful soul—versatile, genial and engaging. The Cresaps of Bolingstone described him as ‘that delightful Thorpe;’ and the Cravens of Stanhope ‘quite envied’ us, in view of a social acquisition so at-

tractive; but that was before Mother Church had taken him to her comfortable bosom. Now see what Holy Orders and a presumptive heiress have done for him! Now he is to me as a red rag to a bull; he stirs all that is worst and meanest in my temper."

"So I see," said Grayhurst, smiling slyly.

In the door of the lodge a man stood lighting a pipe: a swarthy young fellow, with straight black hair and smouldering eyes, who might have posed correctly for a bravo—picturesque but sinister, deriving his gipsy type from a grandmother who had pattered Romany and practiced palmistry at every fair or "mop" in Midlandshire. As the gentlemen drew near, he removed the pipe from his lips and jerked the scant rim of his hat.

"My service t'ye, Mr. Jekyll."

"Good day, Kit. Waiting for the coach?"

"Ay, sir. Ausibel Jem is to fetch a lot o' stuff for the tool-house."

"And the new dogs—have you tried them?"

"I have, sir, to-day in the old fields. The young thing's a trifle foolish and firsty yet, being but a pup, as I may say; but the brown dog stands like a church, sir."

"Good! Meet me at the kennel in the morning, and we'll take them out with the guns."

"Ay, sir! and you'll be pleased."

"There's a treasure," said Jekyll, presently, "to have about a place like this."

“Indeed? Who, or rather what, is he?”

“Kit Abershaw, the Squire’s bailiff—a nondescript, whom no one likes but me; a dull fellow, who never makes a mistake; and a slow fellow, who is always on hand when you want him.”

“And yet see,” said Grayhurst, “how absurdly a worthy creature like that may strike the imagination of a stranger. I remembered that I had seen several such nondescripts hanged in California, who might have been treasures about a place like this; and I was thinking that this slow fellow might, some time or other, be on hand suddenly, when he is *not* wanted.”

CHAPTER VIII.

A RAMBLE AND A SPECTRE.

J EKYLL had taken Grayhurst to Brignal, where he was greeted by Winifred with the frank simplicity of a country girl, finely blended with the daintier graciousness of a conscious gentlewoman. His good report had preceded him, and she was prepared to receive him as a friend of Jekyll, and the Squire's guest. With a woman's sensitive antennæ she was quick to respond to his claim as a sojourner from over the sea, and to invest him with the interest which pertained to that circumstance, apart from his personality; quick to perceive that to the stranger the familiar surroundings of an English farmer's daughter must seem strange, and might be entertaining.

And the music of his mood took its key-note from hers, as he surrendered to the charm of this ideal home—this domicile of sweet content, where mercy and peace had kissed each other, where pride and penury might meet as friends, where the religion of a poet had become the routine of a simple maid :

Can'st drink the waters of the crispéd spring?

O sweet Content !

Swim'st thou in wealth, yet sink'st in thine own tears?

O punishment !

Then he that patiently Want's burden bears,

No burden bears, but is a king, a king !

O sweet Content ! O sweet, O sweet Content !

Work apace, apace, apace, apace !

Honest labor wears a lovely face.

Grayhurst found himself pleasantly perplexed to decide, between the place and its mistress, which owed most to the other. The various loveliness of the homestead, its repose, its purity, its idyllic charm, were reflected in the nature, and even in the person of this English Ruth, while the expression of her conscience, the print of her gracious hand were visible everywhere: in the house, thrift and method with freedom and generous cheer; in kitchen and dairy, consummate precision with fragrant sweetness; in barn and rick-yard and stable, wholesomeness and bounty—with brains.

Hers was not that ignoble humanity which draws its paltry line at "the beast that perisheth;" the ox and the ass at Brignal were proud of their mistress' crib, and the cocks and hens were her bustling little lovers. She was admitted to the confidence of birds and bees; the finny denizens of Giddyburn had told her their secrets; and she was an oracle of folk-lore in cottages where "Lady Goodluck" was but a local name for Providence;

she could have entertained Herrick with charms and weather-proverbs, and Isaac Walton with milking-songs.

Grayhurst, slyly pursuing his researches into the Shustoke pedigree and annals, had expressed a wish to visit the church and churchyard of Overstoke, under cover of a whimsical interest in monuments and other mortuary memorials, relating to people who had lived without newspapers and died without patent medicines—the people of whom Lord Bacon must have thought, when he said, “Out of monuments, names, words, traditions, private records and evidences, fragments of stones, passages of books, and the like, we do save and recover somewhat from the deluge of Time.”

“Quite so!” said Jekyll; “and the proper thing to do is to go a-fishing with a congenial spirit. Go and sit with Winifred on the edge of the Baconian flood, and bob for your respective ancestors.”

And so it was arranged that on the morrow the American, with Winifred for his guide, should explore the storied urns or “frail memorials” of Overstoke. The afternoon of a most sweet day it was—earth and sky, each in its happiest mood, contributing the perfect elements—when Grayhurst, descending the slope from The Chequers, struck into the footpath at the bridge, and taking the fragrant umbrage of the Hurst and the melo-

dious margin of the burn, came, in a mood as happy as the midges that "dance aboon the burn," to the little green wicket in the privet hedge. There Winifred awaited him; from her look-out over the porch she had spied him in the highway, and eager to take the air, had hastened to meet him at the wicket. A simple but winsome hood of some soft pink stuff confined her abundant brown hair, which else might have strayed in wayward tresses and truantries. Her dress of creamy lawn, sprig'd with tender pink blossoms, was a limpid delight, befitting her station, denoting her ways, and in harmony with her surroundings, the season and the scene; her birds and flowers would have approved it, and a posy of blush rosebuds in her bodice seemed a conscious part of the loveliness so modestly revealed there.

"And beautiful besides," thought Grayhurst, completing certain personal reflections wherewith he had entertained himself since he started from the inn. "A Baltimore beauty in a Midland croft!"

For except for certain obscure modulations in "the music of the face," dependent upon temperament perhaps, the beauty of Lady Goodluck was a startling reproduction of that consummate type which is the peculiar renown of the well-born women of Maryland: a strain bred from the finest English stock, and provendered sumptuously—on trout from the mountains of Western Maryland;

shad from the Potomac; oysters and soft-shell crabs from the coves and inlets of Chesapeake Bay; diamond terrapin from the Eastern Shore; canvas-back ducks from the bay-islands; partridges and wood-cock from the uplands; ortolans from the river sedges:—toothsome fare for the Baltimore Beauty, to be by her transmuted through ecstatic processes of assimilation into dainty flesh and blood. Hence a vision purely fair, with dark-brown hair, sheeny with the ripple that artists love, and large profound eyes, mixed of hazel and a shadowy gray,

“ A crystal brow, the moon’s despair,
And the snow’s daughter, a white hand.”

And Grayhurst, who was familiar with this transcendent type, said of Winifred Blythe, “ a Baltimore beauty on a Midland farm ! ”

They passed through the garden, and taking the bosky lane between the hollies, came to a small turnstile in the hedge which hadmitted them to a sinuous footpath, known to the cottagers as “ the Ramble,” but by Winifred called “ Dalliance ”—because, although with honest purpose it started for the church on its progress to the grave, it wandered at its own sweet will, beguiled by curiosity or ease or pastime, pursuing delight and playing with its floral sweethearts.

Mutzie showed the way enraptured, scampering hither and thither in capricious excursions, jerk-

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ing her blowsy head in sharp eager barks, and with petulant insistence of tongue and tail inviting those tiresome bipeds to share her small discoveries—a hen that had “stolen” a nest, a field-mouse or a toad, or a congregation of chithering grasshoppers.

As they emerged from a clump of young alders, and came upon the open ground that skirted Flecknoe Park on that side, a cottage girl, with a basket on her arm, stepped from the path to let them pass; and as she made her shy obeisance she turned upon Winifred a wistful look which was instantly interpreted.

“What is it, Janet?”

The girl’s reply was inaudible to Grayhurst, who saw that she glanced at him timidly; and he turned away.

“The child has something to say to me,” said Winifred. “Probably a mere nothing, but I must hear her. You will indulge us?”

With a smile of satisfaction, as one who makes discovery of a new charm in an already delightful companion, Grayhurst withdrew, and calling Mutzie, strolled about the heath, loitering to inspect some shrub or flower as often as that pretext permitted him to observe discreetly the women in the path.

He saw that the girl talked earnestly, eagerly, and not without excitement, her face expressing wonder at first, and then anxiety. Once she set

down her basket, and waved her arms aloft, with a strange, measured movement ; then she stooped, and seemed to take something from the ground and put it in her bosom—twice she did this ; and finally she fingered her sleeves at the elbows, first the right and then the left, tapping the latter as if denoting an important point in her story.

Presently Winifred spoke gravely and kindly, as Grayhurst could discern by Janet's intent and submissive attitude ; but especially by the slow, solicitous movement of the lady's hand, tenderly stroking the girl's hair as she spoke, with an action that was artlessly maternal. Then the girl took up her basket and went her way, and Winifred rejoined Grayhurst, returning to meet her.

At first she was silent, and seemed perplexed, and he left her to her mood ; but she broke the spell oddly :

“ Have you ghosts in America, Mr. Grayhurst ? ”

“ None that would interest you—only a vulgar variety, a sort of professional apparition, that ends itself to spiritistic performances for a consideration. You can imagine that in so new a country we have not the conditions proper to the development of spooks and wraiths. Our people are apt to shoot at them ; or else they get dissipated in the thin air of country newspapers and threadbare jokes.”

“ And when you shoot at them — what then ? ”

“ Then we give the remains decent burial, and charge the expenses to the estate.”

“ I think I understand, as well as one may with the average English mind. So you do not believe in ghosts? ”

“ I have not said so ; in fact I do, so far as one may with the average American mind, unfurnished with myths and ruins. But do you? ”

“ Why not? Since I have to deal with them as actually as with the mumps or the measles. How does it help me that I have no ghosts of my own, so long as my neighbors entertain them. To those who do believe in them, ghosts are ghosts, not to be joked or giped out of the argument. Here in Midlandshire our spooks and wraiths are as real as our ruins ; and they must be *laid*, with the bell, book and candle of tact and sympathy. Mr. Grayhurst, if you should see a ghost here, in Over-stoke or Yawdley, would you shoot at it? ”

“ Never ! ”

“ Why not? ”

“ Because if it were truly disembodied, I should be wasting my ammunition, and making a fool of myself besides ; and if it were only the masquerading of some tangible idiot, somebody might get obliterated, in a population already scanty.”

“ Thank you ! that assurance relieves my mind ; for I think you will shortly see a ghost. Janet Drum has just told me of one that walks.”

“ She has seen it? ”

“ Only with the eyes of faith and Bessie Mann. Janet is the child of the Overstoke bell-ringer, a creature compact of superstition ; and to his docile, simple girl a ghost is an entity as actual as her own bacon and brown bread. Bessie Mann is the daughter of the Wynhold carrier, a mild scoffer with the conceit of a ‘ funny man,’ who smiles superior upon the cherished credulities of the three parishes ; and to his quick-witted, self-sufficient Bessie a ghost is simply ‘ rare fun.’ Now the circumstance that confers peculiar importance upon this latest apparition is that it has challenged Bessie Mann, and sent her screaming and trembling to Malachi Drum’s cottage, whither she fled in terror and hysterics ; and Janet has gone to consult the apothecary at Yawdley.”

“ What is the story ? ”

“ A short one, and to the point. Yesterday Bessie was at The Chequers all day, helping the maids with the house-cleaning.”

“ And by the same token,” said Grayhurst, “ what a mess they made of it ! I had no place for the sole of my foot.”

“ They were late with the work ; it was bed-time before all was done and the things in their places. Then they must have supper, for Hindman is kind and thoughtful for his servants ; and so it lacked but a few minutes to eleven when Bessie started to walk home. As I have told you, she lives at Wynhold, nearly four miles from The

Chequers. Hindman would have persuaded her to remain, and pass the night with the maids; but her father, she said, would be looking for her, and might be angry. The moon was bright, and a brisk walk would rest her. As for danger, no one thought of that—our Midland lasses have the freedom of the high-way at all hours, and Bessie is famously brave; once, when her mother was ill, she took a short cut through the churchyard at midnight to fetch the doctor; no man of her class would have done it.

“Well, she had passed the bridge, and the lodge, mounting the hill; and when she came to the lych-gate of the churchyard she was marching smartly to her own music, singing as she went. The lych-gate, as you will see, is withdrawn from the high-road and screened by a clump of willows, which form a deep and doleful shadow there; but to Bessie they were merely some trees and a gate, and she would have marched on singing—but for a flash of white, that burst through the dark bower of the gate, and stood in the moonlight near the girl: a woman, young, and a lady, Bessie says, clad all in white, but very pretty, like a fine lady; and her face, and her neck, and her arms, and her hair, even her hair, were all white, like snow, just like new-fallen snow.”

“Whose words are these?”

“Bessie’s, as Janet repeated them; and Janet is mechanically literal.”

“There the lady stood, and there Bessie stood; but the spectre seemed not to see Bessie, and Bessie could not speak nor move. Then the poor lady looked up at the sky, and held out her hands, as if to catch something that was falling, and whatever it was, she put it in her bosom; and she stooped, and seemed to take something from the ground, handfuls! and she put *that* in her white bosom—three times she did that; and then she looked up at the sky again, and waved her white arms, solemn-like, so! [here Winifred exactly repeated Janet’s action]; and then she turned, and went back through the lych-gate into the churchyard; and the last that Bessie saw of the poor lorn thing was her white hair, and her white arms waving—so!”

“Well?” said Grayhurst.

“That’s all,” said Winifred; “Bessie knows no more. She found herself, shivering and trembling in Janet’s arms; that’s all—No, not quite all: just one thing more, but to me more curious than all the rest. As Bessie stood, petrified and dumb, she noticed that on the right sleeve of the white dress—short ‘elbow-sleeves’—there was a pretty bow of white ribbon; she looked for its companion, but on the left sleeve there was none; and Bessie wondered if the lady knew she had lost it. As a revelation of feminine instinct that is matchless.”

“And as circumstantial evidence,” said Gray-

hurst, "it is conclusive. The girl did surely see—the other."

"'The other' was Cicely Shustoke, the Snow Bride; but you have not heard the story: She was the only daughter of Hugo Shustoke of Overstoke, a man of feudal ideas and iron will, whose children were his chattels. Perhaps he desired their happiness, but he allowed them no voice in that matter, nor in any other; and he brooked no argument from their friends.

"There were but two of them, Cicely and Rupert, who was afterward high-sheriff. The boy was the younger by five years, and Cicely was in her nineteenth year when she died, in 1675. Tradition describes her as a most gentle and timid creature, trembling before her father, and broken between her love and her fear of him. There is a picture of her at Overstoke, which is thought to resemble Barbara; but it is rarely shown to visitors, because the tragedy of Cicely disturbed the even tenor of the Shustoke ways.

"When it seemed good to her father that Cicely should be married, he gave her to a crony of his, as he would have given a colt or a heifer. Boulton of Wynhold, a tough old bachelor of good estate, who had made himself necessary to the comfort of the master of Overstoke, by hunting or fishing with him by day and hobnobbing with him at night, had looked with favor upon Cicely. One night, over a game of draughts and a bottle, the

Squire bantered Boulton for a 'soft old loon,' and told him to 'take the pretty kitten, and keep her kindly.' As for the pretty kitten, it only winced and trembled, and ran to hide itself; for Cicely had given her heart to her kinsman, young Meriden of Yawdley. That was their secret, and they were biding their time; but here was an end of all that. When her lover said Fate and she said Father, they meant the same thing.

"Her bridal dress was ready, and the wedding was to be on Christmas Eve. For two days snow had fallen in great feathery flakes, and now lay deep in all the fields and ways. On the morning of Christmas Eve, when Cicely's nurse went to her 'lady-bird's' chamber to call her, she found the nest empty; the bed had not been occupied, although the clothes that Cicely had worn the night before were lying in disorder on couches or on the floor; but the bridal robes were missing; drawers had been opened, and their contents scattered—confusion and flight!

"They searched the house, they beat the woods, they dragged the mere; they made a hue-and-cry and turned the parishes upside down—no Cicely.

"On Christmas night a hedger's wife, in their cottage near the churchyard, nagged at her goodman till she made him take a lantern over the wall, to grope among the graves for a noise she had heard the night before—a woman's cry; she had thought it was a dream then, but now she felt

it was a Thing. No sound, no sign; the fleecy winding-sheet lay soft and smooth over all, and the man would have returned to his warm bed and his foolish missus—when the light of his lantern fell on the group of Shustoke graves, near the church porch; and there he counted one grave more than ever he had counted before. It lay close to the Squire's dame, poor dumb trouble!—and such a clever grave! no clumsy varlet's job, with mattock and shovel, but just a neat figure of a corpse, that the snow had made.

“And then with his hands he began to clear away the snow; he was too simple to be afraid; snow was snow, and dead was dead to him.

“She had gone to sleep by her mother's side, and drawn the coverlet over her. And she had cuddled the pretty snow in her bosom, as a child cuddles a pet.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE CHURCHYARD.—A STORY AND A RIBBON.

“THE dear old church!” said Winifred; “I think our people love it better than they know. Is it not beautiful in this view? with its ivied towers and buttresses, and the superlative elegance of the spire—no finer spire in all England. We have a peal of five bells, so cheerful and so sweet! When you hear them you cease to wonder at the persuasive charm of chimes in our rural parishes. And then our Overstoke church is equipped with all the hallowed accessories that help to complete its endearment and its inspiration. We have an ancient stone font; and an iron-clamped poor-box, with its posy, ‘Give Alms of thy goods, and never turn thy face from any Poor Man.’ The tottering crone, who rests on the bench in the porch, can exchange conclusions with the same sun-dial that entertained her grandmother. In the floors of the main aisle and the chancel are ancient brasses with legends—I know them all by heart: ‘Of your Mercy, Pray for the soul of Alice Clifton.’”

"ABELE: SOTESTOKE: GIST: ICI:

/ DIEU: DE: SA: ALME: EIT: MERCI.

"POUR LAMOUR DE JESU CHRIST:

PRIEZ POUR SA ALME Q'ICI GIST.

"PATER NOSTER ET AVE:

THOMAS DE YADLEGHE FUT APELLE.

"I am sorry," she continued, "that we cannot get entrance to the church to-day. The old dame who keeps the keys is charring and gossiping at Wynhold—one of the small ripples of interest in the tame current of her life; but we can find entertainment in the churchyard. Did you know what I meant by the lych-gate in Bessie's adventure?"

"Perhaps I guessed," said Grayhurst; "I know 'the shrieking litch-owl;' and there is Lichfield, the field of the dead. Your lych-gate must be the gate through which the dead are borne."

"I forgot you were an American. It was one of your countrymen who said, 'Give me a start of plain schooling and a gift of guessing, and I'll catch up to an Englishman with a liberal education.' Yes, the lych-gate is the gate of the corpse—and here it is. The path leading to it is the lych-lane. Under the shelter of this ancient shed the bearers set down their burden and rest, till the coming of the clergyman who is to conduct the services. Then they take it up again, and follow him through the avenue of willows to the

church. After the burial the spirit of that person mounts guard here, and keeps the gate until relieved by the next comer."

With no change of tone or manner, no visible consciousness of mystery, Winifred delivered these words as if they expressed a familiar circumstance; and the American received them as conveying to his mind merely a novel and interesting fact.

"On St. John's Eve, if you watch in the church porch until the midnight hour is struck on the great clock, you may see the wraiths of all those who are to die within the year (perhaps your own) enter by this gate, and follow the robed priest to the places appointed for their final lodging.

"A lyke-wake is a death-watch—*lych* and *lyke* being only different forms of the same word. I know a strange lyke-wake dirge that the women of Yorkshire sang of old to their corpses. Would you like to hear it?"

"Miss Blythe," said Grayhurst, "you have the glamour of Old England; and it is my great-grandfather's great-grandfather whom you are entertaining in my person."

"Understand then, that the women who sing this song believe ('such is their fondness') that the dead must pass through 'a launde full of thorns and furzen'—that is Whinny Muir; and then the Bridge of Dread must be crossed, to enter Purgatory."

And as they went through the avenue and came among the graves, she recited :

“ This ae nighte, this ae nighte,
Everie nighte and alle,
Fire and salte and candle-lighte ;
And Christe receive thy saule !

“ When thou from hence away art past,
Everie nighte and alle,
To Whinny-Muir thou com'st at last ;
And Christe receive thy saule.

“ If ever thou gavest hosen and shoon,
Everie nighte and alle,
Sit thee down and put them on ;
And Christe receive thy saule !

“ If hosen and shoon thou gavest nane,
Everie nighte and alle,
The Whinnes shall prick thee to th' bare bane ;
And Christe receive thy saule !

“ From Brigg o' Dread when thou mayst pass,
Everie nighte and alle,
To Purgatorie Fire thou com'st at last ;
And Christe receive thy saule !

“ If ever thou gavest meate or drinke,
Everie nighte and alle,
The fire shall never make thee shrinke ;
And Christe receive thy saule !

“ If meate or drinke thou gavest nane,
Everie nighte and alle,
The fire shall burne thee to th' bare bane ;
And Christe receive thy saule !

“This æ nighte, this æ nighte,
Everie nighte and alle,
Fire and salte and candle-lighte ;
And Christe receive thy saule !

“Is not that uncanny? Imagine the ululation of the solo, and the chorus of crones in the alternate lines.”

“And the cry of the poor, and the torment of the cruel,” said Grayhurst. “I perceive now why you respect these superstitions, Miss Blythe ; you have caught their undertone of pathos and appeal, which is lost to the duller ear of indifference and slowness of heart.”

“They are always pitiful,” said Winifred, modestly, “and often accusing, these parables of the childish mind. But where do you get your insight ?”

“From your eyes.”

Then their eyes met ; and each in the other saw the invisible, and wondered if the other saw it too.

Returning by way of the church, Winifred paused at a little grave, quite fenced and canopied with flowers.

“This was a most beautiful and engaging little lad,” she said, “the pride of the Meridens of Yawdley. The old still love to talk of his supernatural grace and winsomeness, and the maids to frame his grave in flowers. It was the Squire’s young sister, Barbara’s mother, who suggested

these lines from Ben Jonson's epitaph on the boy-actor :

" Weep with me, all ye who read
This little story ;
And know for whom a tear ye shed,
Death's self is sorry.

" ' Twas a child, that did so thrive
In grace and feature,
That heaven and nature seemed to strive
Which owned the creature."

" If the lines," said Grayhurst, " reflect the taste and feeling of the mother, one may look for graceful revelations from the daughter. And these Meridens, did they not intermarry with the Shustokes? Cicely, the Snow Bride, had given her heart to a Meriden, you said ; but was there not a marriage in the preceding generation?"

" I see the Squire has been with you ; or was it Dick? I should be pleased to know that our hare-brained cynic has developed a taste for pedigree, to the extent of inquiring how he came into the world. Yes, I have heard the Squire say that a Shustoke of Overstoke married Mary Meriden of Yawdley ; and the pretty lad who lies under this stone had Shustokes for his ancestors. As for that, so had I, through my mother's people, the Curzons. And now I learn, through Mr. Jekyll,

that you have Shustokes in Maryland: Mr. Julian, for example, who drives mules."

"The plot thickens," said Grayhurst; "I shall be claiming you presently for that intrepid Fortyniner, as a long-lost cousin, seventy-seven times removed. But how *did* Jekyll come into the world?"

"He is the creature of circumstance, peculiar in his generation. Once, in the spring of 1783—it was in Squire Marmaduke's time—the Bolingstone coach brought to Ausibel a passenger who looked like a vagabond and behaved like a prince. He was all unkempt and tattered, but he wore his dishevelment with an air of distinction. You would not have given a half-crown for his coat, but the price of a rich wardrobe was in his purse. The inn-people smiled when his back was turned, and uncovered to him when he faced them. The guard whispered that he had shot a highwayman and cudgeled a gipsy, before he turned into the inn-yard at Bolingstone and abandoned his jaded nag; but the stranger appeared to have forgotten those diverting episodes. He gave no account of himself, and no one ventured to question him. On the third day he summoned the landlord, and asked the way to Overstoke, seeming surprised when he was told that he had passed it in the coach. With a careless question about the family there, he extracted from his garrulous host a sup-

ply of information out of all proportion to the demand. Then he took horse and rode to the manor.

“Squire Marmaduke received him with caution, even with suspicion; and yet, as he afterward explained, with a certain unaccountable compunction from the first glance. ‘The lad’s face,’ he said, ‘was as a dim and dear remembrance.’

“The stranger’s address compelled attention—deferential yet confident, and delivered with a quality of refinement strangely at variance with his almost reckless aspect. A few words at the close, uttered with a bright frank smile, drew from the squire an exclamation of astonishment. He invited the new-comer into his Library, where they remained closeted together the whole of that afternoon. When they came forth, they were friends.

“The stranger’s horse was sent back to the inn; the stranger became the honored guest of Overstoke; and when next he appeared at Ausibel, this time in the conventional attire of a country gentleman, he was presented by the squire as ‘my young kinsman, Mr. Richard Shustoke, son of a cousin of mine who died abroad.’

“Nothing more particular was disclosed; curiosity was held in check by a significant reserve. ‘Abroad’ was an elastic term, which people might fit to their conjectures to please themselves; in that connection nothing definite was ever known,

except that the young man had come last from France.

“Near Wynhold, a pretty house that had been a hunting-lodge, with agreeable grounds about it belonging to the squire, chanced to be without a tenant at this time ; 'tis Jekyll's 'den' to-day—the Croft, you know. Here the comely and interesting cousin 'from abroad' was installed ; and here for several years he led the life of a popular young squire, 'approved by nobility and gentry,' extravagantly admired by susceptible woman-kind, and beloved by the poor ; only the more fractious youth of his class lamented his actual 'slowness,' while they suspected his athletic and festive possibilities. It was noticed that his resources, though mysterious, were regular and sufficient ; he never lacked the means to hold his own among gentlemen, although he indulged in no vain prodigalities ; and his dearest friend and comrade was the squire's son, Ralph.

“At last he married Grace, only child of Sir George Esseby of Ausibel. Sir George had received him graciously, but held him in a hopeful suspense. 'Young gentleman,' he said, 'you have not taken me by surprisc, and your suit is not displeasing. But first I have certain questions to ask of your kinsman and my good friend ; afterward, you shall hear from me. But I trust that, in any case, you and I may still be neighborly.'

“On the morrow the two cronies took counsel together in the library at Overstoke. Their sitting was long, and the wine was good, and the Squire’s account of his young kinsman from abroad must have been satisfactory (geographically and otherwise) to Sir George ; for the lovers were married at Easter.

“But Sir George kept the family secret ; and to this day, in the land of the living, only Squire Randal knows whence came that Richard Shustoke, or who were his people.

“In due time a girl was born to the young couple, and it was her father’s fancy to call her Johanna.”

The American’s interest expressed itself in a soft furtive whistle.

“I beg your pardon,” he said ; “that is a national note of exclamation. I was struck with the name, and with a coincidence. We had a Johanna Shustoke in Maryland ; and her husband, Richard, was the first of the name in America. The family-tree of my friend Julian springs from that pair. But what became of the child ?”

“She grew to be a lovely young woman, and was married to Arthur Jekyll, of an old Dorset family : a young gentleman of amiable qualities, fair talents, and moderate fortune. But Johanna was always fragile ; in the birth of her child she nearly gave her life for the lad ; and although she lived until he was five years old, she never recov-

ered from the shock of that great peril. In obedience to their medical advisers, Jekyll took her to Italy, leaving the child with his grandfather; there the young mother took the Roman fever and died; and her husband, broken by the dreadful stroke, was buried by her side, before her father, now a widower, could come to comfort him.

"The orphan lad became the playmate and darling of his grandfather, who could hardly spare him out of his sight. At first he taught the child himself, and then he engaged a tutor—a phenomenal curate with more heart than head, and with all knowledge except knowledge of the world.

"The lad was very teachable, an animated note of interrogation: sensitive, tender, ardent, impetuous, adventurous. His grandfather called him Devil Dick."

"His grandfather! This is very strange."

"Was it not?—so unlike the old man, never given to extravagant or unseemly expressions. And Dick pretends that he has lived up to his title. I think it will even outlast him; for it has become to the people here, who love him one and all, a term of endearment, a pet name.

"There!" she concluded, "I have told you all I know, (all that even Richard knows), as we have gathered it from the fond recitals of the good Squire and my dear old Judith. And I have told you, Mr. Grayhurst, because I wish you to discern, and—yes, to influence, a life that is dear to us."

“Miss Blythe,” said the American, “you do me singular honor, and yet it is my good fortune to deserve it; for there can be no man in England whom I would so gladly serve as Devil Dick Shustoke.”

They had reached the group of Shustoke tombs, that formed an imposing little cemetery in front of the church porch. These were for the most part altar-tombs, and Winifred led her companion to those that bore the crosslet, and the names of Hugo and Rupert, Marmaduke and Ralph—helping the American to decipher the inscriptions, which in more than one instance might have been tedious but for their quaintness.

“Now I must think of Julian,” said Grayhurst, “and copy this curious legend of Hugo, if you will indulge me. Some other time I can take the others;” and Winifred, leaving him to his notebook and pencil, bent her steps toward the grave of the ill-fated Cicely, who was at the moment in her thoughts. Bending over the broad flat stone, she was intently engaged in perusing with renewed interest the tragic story, when Grayhurst’s attention was diverted from his task by the clamorous barking of Mutzie.

The vivacious little creature had again found something, and would have persuaded Winifred to come and see; but failing in this, she disappeared in the tall herbage near Cicely’s tomb, and presently returned dragging a bow of soft, white

ribbon, which she laid at her mistress's feet—this time insisting upon the discovery in her sharp imperative way.

Then Winifred looked down. With a stifled exclamation of astonishment and consternation, she snatched the ribbon; with a woman's deft trick of inspection she questioned it with a touch and a glance, then hid it in her bosom; and then she turned and looked at the American. He was scratching his head and knitting his brows over a half-obliterated word.

CHAPTER X.

SOCIAL AND LYRICAL.—DECLINED WITH THANKS.

REVERSING the natural order of topographical statement, the village of Yawdley may be described as convenient to The Chequers, which is to impute to the hostelry a measure of relative importance not greater than its due ; for the inn, standing aloof from the modest little thorp, and yet hard by, at once sequestered and conspicuous, was the true centre of travel and traffic, of local interest and agitation, and the instituted exchange of gossip. The Brahmins have a cynical proverb, "What is the news of the day to a frog in a well?" and when the frogs of Yawdley, Overstoke and Wynhold were stirred by the sound of news in the air, they straightway came out of their wells and hopped to The Chequers, where they squatted expectant and made unfathomable faces at each other.

The highway southward from Sylcaster, as it mounted the long hill, became the High-street of Yawdley :—no ideal, scene-shifter's village, "all gables and acacia," but just a utilitarian develop-

ment of domiciles around a town-well and a "green," an old church and a pillory. Not that it was destitute of those pleasing features which are familiar in the aspect of a Midland village; for there were the thatched cottage and the trim hedge, the grass plot and the flower bed, the woodbine, ensign of home, and the holly, hallowed to Christmas—charms that can glorify a factory and make a railway-station a rapture; but the muse did not come to Yawdley to celebrate these things, and the masters have not portrayed them.

Yet Yawdley could boast of one conspicuous advantage: it was near The Chequers. When Sylcaster Luke, profoundly cogitating upon the illusions of life, and the inscrutable purpose involved in the creation of horse-flies, came to the top of the High-street, between the pillory and the "Bagman's Rest," he cast off the slow drag of his mind as his four smart bays completed the tug of Yawdley Hill; and merrily, all together, they took the level stretch to the left, for full suppers and soft beds, and all the rest of the realities to be revealed in a night at The Chequers.

A festal night; for this was Toby's birthday. "Here's his jolly good 'ealth," thought Luke, "and many happy returns of the same! A landlord of the warm old sort; burly and bluff, with a sound head and a soft heart; sticks to black velvet smalls and leather leggins o' Sundays; keeps open house to the homeless; counts a good

horse a better Christian than a lazy parson; hates railways and bird-cages; wants fair play for gipsies and dogs; would sooner drink with a coachman than bet with a lord; despises trousers; wishes Dick Turpin was here to speak for himself; feeds the hungry, gives good measure, clothes the naked, and kicks a sneak."

It was Toby's custom on his birthnight to receive the congratulations of his friends in the great kitchen, which was fondly garnished for the occasion with sheen of metal and pageantry of flowers. Burnished kettles and pans made a brave splendor on the dressers; open cupboards displayed their ceramic fancies; the smoke-jack clanked and the tall clock ticked with official importance; the sooty rafters hung out their "garnered fulness" in streaky hams and flitches; and on the long deal table, scoured with silver-sand and enthusiasm, the succulence of beef and mutton, and the savor of rabbits stewed with onions, were as the incense of adulation to the master of the feast. There was a tankard of ale or a stoop of cider to every man's hand, and healths and draughts went free; while pipes and shag invited the contemplative parishioner to the fume of life without the fret.

The company came early and all together, the latest arrival but a few minutes behind the first; for these were but clumsy rustics, and in their ignorance they stumbled upon the good manners

their lagging betters would have scorned. Every man, in his Sunday best, clean and solemn, hung up his hat as he entered, and straightway applied himself with great singleness of mind to the consumption of the viands; else, what were they there for, and what was expected of him? And he served himself, and fed standing. "Help yourself, and please yourself," was landlord's law on these occasions, and experiment had demonstrated that the largest capacity for the stowage of victuals is afforded by a strictly perpendicular posture, with deliberation. "A mortal's inside," said the carrier, "is like a bottle: you must stand him up to fill him up."

At the close of this performance (which, by mutual knowledge of the methods and powers employed, was so well timed that no soul was left to strive in solitude), every man emitted a deep-drawn sigh of satisfaction, such as, heard through a thin partition, may not be distinguished from the common sigh of disappointment and regret. Then the full guest wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, took up his brimming tankard, and retired to his appointed place at the great bare table in the middle of the room, where he girded up the loins of his mind, and braced himself for the intellectual encounter.

Martin Cole, the wheelwright, with a face like a buttered cherub, took the floor by right of seniority, and proposed the time-worn toast,

which was honored with all the tumultuous cordiality due to the most startling novelty:—
 “Here’s wishin’ good luck to The Chequers, and a jolly good ‘ealth to the landlord; and many happy returns of the same!”

Then Toby, modestly covering the inner disk of his countenance with the convenient mask of a tankard, and clearing the cobwebs from his vocal gallery with a noble draught, proceeded to deliver himself (in a robust baritone, trained on bacon and greens) of the song that immemorial usage had dedicated to his birthnight:—

“God above, who rules all things,
 Monks and abbots, and beggars and kings,
 The ships that in the sea do swim,
 The earth, and all that is therein—
 Not forgetting the old cow’s hide,
 And every thing else in the world beside;
 And I wish his soul in heaven may dwell,
 Who first invented the leathern bottel!”

CHORUS by the company: “And I wish his soul.”

* * * * *

“Now when this bottel it is worn out,
 Out of his sides you may cut a clout;
 This you may hang upon a pin—
 ‘Twill serve to put odd trifles in:
 Ink and soap and candle-ends,
 For young beginners have need of such friends;
 And I wish his soul in heaven may dwell
 Who first invented the leathern bottel!”

Chorus as before, with approving clatter of tankards, while Heber Tripp, the shoemaker, expressed his unabated admiration of the landlord's voice.

"A fine boisterous organ," he said; "I never heard the likes of it for making a man's welkins ring."

"True, Heber!" said Malachi Drum, the bell-ringer; "it do have a welcome ring—strong as triples and musical as bob-majors; it do."

"He thought I said welcome," murmured the shoemaker, with a gentle sorrow. "How strange the figgers o' speech do fall on the common ear! 'Tis as sounding brass and tinker's symbols to some."

"Soldier!" said Luke Crotty, who was describing to the landlord a remarkable passenger he had brought from Sylcaster that afternoon. "Yes, 'twere only one soldier when you come to count its arms and legs; but you'd 'a' thought 'twere an army with banners, with a brass band and a drum-major throw'd in, if you'd 'a' heered it talk. It must 'a' slept with field-marshal the Dook, and played skittles with Bonyparte, besides amusin' of itself now and then, a-kickin' of the Horse-guards around. I never see nothink so warlike since old Carnage, the cock-eyed tailor, used to drill the goose-step grenadiers at Sylcaster."

"And where may this lobster be now?" inquired Toby.

"I guess he just stepped over to buy Overstoke ; leastways he had three-and-six in his pocket."

"I met a soldier," said the carrier, Abel Mann, "as I were a-comin' Brignal way along. He called me Turmots, and arsked what were the price o' pigs. I arsked him were any of his fambly in litter."

This bucolic sally of the facetious carrier was greeted with a spontaneous burst of applause and much pounding of pewter ; and then the landlord invited Silas Parr, the schoolmaster, to favor the company with a song. A colorless young man with a pale voice responded with a plaintive recital of his adventures in Cupid's Garden. He explained that he had not walked in that garden "the pahst of 'arf an hour," when there he saw two pretty maids a-sitting under a shady bower. One of these was lovely Nancy, whom every man in the company must have known and admired, seeing how all nodded and smiled when she was named ; "the other was a virgin, who did the laurel wear."

"I boldly stepped up to her,
And unto her did say,
Are you engaged to any young man ?
Do tell to me, I pray.
I'm not engaged to any young man,
I solemnly do swear ;
I mean to live a virgin,
And still the laurel wear."

The accents of keen suffering in which the pale

young man succeeded in steeping the virgin's statement of her condition and her views, though not impervious to criticism on the score of exaggeration, were irresistible in their appeal to the compassion of his audience; and Jekyll and Grayhurst, appearing at that moment, found the company in full enjoyment of the tender episode.

The gentlemen entered laughing, as if bringing with them the humor of a situation which was presently to be explained. They greeted the company cheerily, and flattered the landlord with appropriate compliments and expressions of goodwill.

"Ah! there is Luke," said Jekyll; "now we shall have 'The Auld Wife,' as no other man can sing it. Come, Crotty! the maut's aboon the meal the night, and Mr. Grayhurst and I will give you biberry-bum with a will."

When Fortune made a coachman of Luke Crotty she spoiled a strolling-player, for the man had a true Thespian faculty for the making of faces and singing of character songs. He had served his apprenticeship on the box between Carlisle and Dumfries, and at "The Bolster," on the road, where he had acquired an assortment of Scotch songs more remarkable for pungent humor than refinement, but happily chosen for the display of his eccentric gifts. The tipsy widower in the "Auld Wife" was his strong part, and he always sang that song for his own benefit. Jekyll's

cajoling easily beguiled him, and in a moment he was transformed—blinking sottishly and with a maudlin snuffle, as he hugged his pint-stoop, with his hair in his eyes:

“O fare ye weel, my auld wife !

Sing bum, biberry bum ;

O fare ye weel, my auld wife !

Sing bum.

O fare ye weel, my auld wife !

Thou steerer up o’ sturt and strife !

(The maut’s aboon the meal the night,

Wi’ some.)”

Here Luke’s boozy leer and wink must be imagined.

“And fare ye weel, my pike-staff !

Sing bum, biberry bum ;

And fare ye weel, my pike-staff !

Sing bum.

And fare ye weel, my pike-staff !

Nae mair wi’ thee my wife I’ll baff !

(The maut’s aboon the meal the night,

Wi’ some.)

“Fu’ white white was her winding sheet !

Sing bum, biberry bum ;

Fu’ white white was her winding sheet !

Sing bum.

I was o’er gladsome far to greet ;

I danced my lane, and sang to see’t !

(The maut’s aboon the meal the night,

Wi’ some.)”

Every man shot out the Bum and the Biberry-

bum with the thump of a bass drum, and the applause at the end was vigorous and hilarious. But Dolly Sparrow broke the din with most admired disorder, as she bounced into the room, red and panting, and disheveled as to her ribbons and her ringlets.

Now, Dolly Sparrow was always pretty, and she knew it—prettiest in a passion, as everybody knew; but her opportunities in that direction were rare. The current of her career at The Chequers flowed with monotonous placidity between the impartial coquetries of her calling and the privileged petulancies of her place. By the household at the inn, and by the guests, whether from the parishes or the coaches, her ways were regarded with indulgence, and even with a sort of playfulness; so that she was usually thrown upon her ingenuity to invent her own provocations, and often sighed forlorn for the luxury of a flashing rosy rage.

And here she had one, hot as heart could desire, brought by a fellow in a scarlet coat.

“Well—if—ever! Is there such a thing as a Man here? Where’s the master? Oh!”

“What’s the matter, lass?” inquired Hindman, blandly contemplating the furious form between the serene puffs of his yard o’ clay.

“Well, did ever! What’s the house coming to? that’s what I want to know. What *is* a British bar-maid? Anybody’s hussy, I suppose, to be

touzled by every red rascal that comes over the road! Oh!"

"I know'd it," said Luke; "it's that goose-step warrior; he's been a-surroundin' of Dolly."

"Oh, you are there, are you, Mr. Crotty? Enjoying of yourself, as is only your just dues, after doing the house the honor to bring us such a galliant milit'ry hero as I've just been a-throw-in' tobies and wine-glasses at; which if you had broke his beastly neck I'd have gladly presented you with *two* bokays and a lock of me 'air."

Luke glanced shamefaced at the nosegay in his button-hole, and was squelched.

"Come, come, lass!" said Toby, who had left his place and approached the girl. "What's all this about? Did the fellow insult you?"

"That depends upon what you expect of me, Mr. Hindman, sir. If I was your daughter, and a nahsty lobster like that was to claw me as if I was carrion, I dare say you'd call it insult; but being as I'm only your bar-maid, you may call it business."

"Hoot, child! I'm ashamed of you; you know me better. Daughter or Dolly, it's all one when it comes to the likes o' that."

"But, Mr. Hindman, sir, when he tried to kiss me I threw a toby and two glasses at him."

"Good! I forgive you the crockery."

"But I *missed* him! and him such a big blackguard."

“Ah! Dolly, Dolly!” cried Jekyll; “after all the practice you’ve had. You never miss me.”

“Mr. Jekyll, sir, I never knew you to dodge a wine-glass.”

“Miss Sparrow, I never knew you to dodge a kiss.”

And the Furious Form retired tickled and mincing, followed by the landlord.

“Fetch the fellow here, Toby,” said Jekyll. “He seems to be dull company for himself. We will endeavor to amuse him, or rout him.”

But Hindman returned in a moment, pleased and proud, and leading Phyllis by the hand.

“Why, here’s my little lass!” he said, “come by her mistress’ leave to drink her daddy’s health, and sing a song for his birthday. Make your service to the gentlemen, my pretty, and pass a pleasant word with the neighbors, while I see to this soldier chap;” and he kissed her tenderly, leaving her there.

For a moment the girl stood, saluting the company with happy gracious eyes; and a blush and a smile met in the paradise of her face, like lovers in a garden. Then, with drooping lids, and one hand on her bosom, she prettily louted to the “gentry,” as she proceeded to make the circuit of the table, greeting her father’s friends. From face to face of that rustic company a smile of tender pleasure flitted, blended of friendliness and admiration; and they blessed her as she passed.

When she came to Simon Dudder, that good old yeoman kissed her cheek; and for a moment they rested so, the dainty soft rose fondling the wrinkled brown, and the spare grizzled locks pathetically caressing that splendor of golden braids.

“Ah! but ye be bonny, my child,” said Simon, “and good as bonny, I doubt na. Ye be in my Mistress Winifred’s prayers; and she do have an angel to her own. The Lord, He will keep thee safe!”

Grayhurst glanced at Jekyll; there was a strange soft light in the eyes of Devil Dick. And then he looked at the girl, and wondered if there was ever anything so pitifully lovely; for even through her gladness he discerned the shadow of trouble and appeal. Her gown and its simple adornments were like an old country song, so limpid, so idyllic, so musically befitting:—

My love is like a melody,
That’s sweetly played in tune.

Here was no “winning wave, deserving note, in the tempestuous petticoat,” nor aught that “kindles in clothes a wantonness,” but just the tranquil ingenuousness of a violet by a mossy stone.

“Phyllis,” he said, taking her hand kindly, “I am glad—we are all glad, you see—that you have come to complete your father’s happiness, and to give us a surprise that is pleasanter than all the songs and toasts. And if I had known you all your life, like our good neighbors here, I should

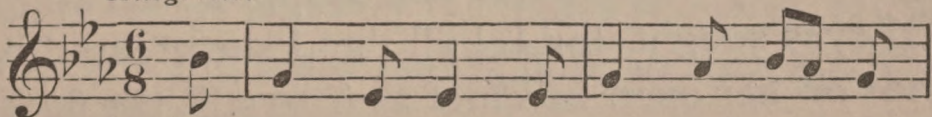
be taking an old friend's privilege, and making you a pretty speech, that should be all the prettier for being true and all the truer for being pretty. Mr. Jekyll and I can see that you look like a flower; and now we are waiting for you to behave like a bird, and sing for us, as your father has promised."

"Ah! but you be good, Mr. Grayhurst, to say pleasant things to me, all out of your kindness; and you may trust me, that they shall not make me foolish, sir. It pleases my father that I should sing for the neighbors on his birthday, one simple old song that we Midland folk love, because it is so old and so simple. I'll try, if you'll excuse me, sir."

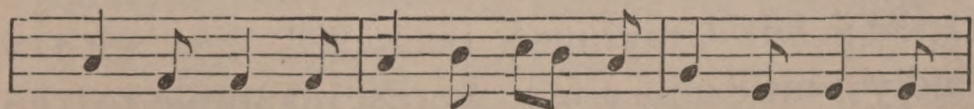
And again the American noted that, while her words were to him, her thought and her glance were for Jekyll, in whose eyes the soft light deepened, as he smiled.

Then Grayhurst called the audience to order, and the girl, standing by his side, sang with alluring sweetness, and with the guileless manner of a little child, the song of the Hawthorn Tree:—

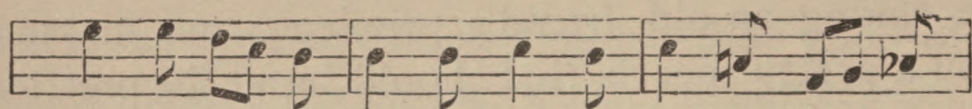
Allegretto.



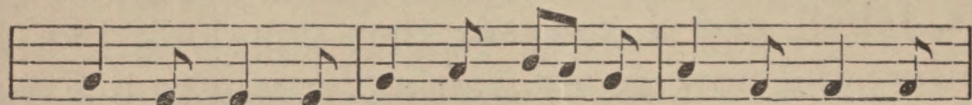
It was a maid of my coun-try, as



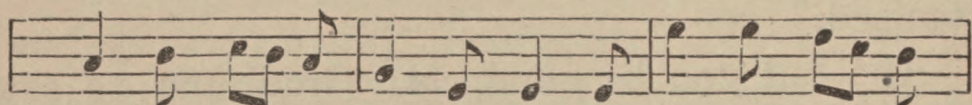
she came by a hawthorn tree, As full of flow'rs as



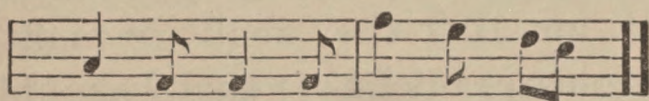
might be seen, She marvell'd to see the tree so green. At



last she ask - ed of the tree, How came this freshness



un - to thee, And ev - 'ry branch so fair and clean ? I



mar - vel that you grow so green.

“The tree made answer by and by ;
I have cause to grow triumphantly ;
The sweetest dew that ever be seen
Doth fall upon me to keep me green.

“Yea, quoth the maid, but when you grow
You stand at hand at ev'ry blow,
Of every man for to be seen :
I marvel that you grow so green.”

At this moment, a soldier, with an insolent face, entered the room by the lower door, and striding to the head of the table said, “the bumpkins are convivial ;” and so stood, staring at the singer. Phyllis trembled and stopped ; her frightened eyes sought for Jekyll ; and she crossed her hands on her open kerchief as if to still the flutter of her bosom. Then she turned, and would have escaped ; but Grayhurst reassured her with a friendly smile and a few words inaudible to the others, and she made a brave effort :

“—Though many one take flowers from me,
And many a branch out of my tree,
I have such store they will not be seen,
For more and more my twigs grow green.
“—But how an’ they chance to cut thee down,
And carry thy branches into the town?
Then they will never more be seen
To grow again so fresh and green.”

The soldier took some coins from his pocket, and deliberately selecting two half-crowns, approached the startled creature, saying, “Here, my beauty! Buy a love-knot, and wear it for a soldier. If you are looking for a sweetheart, I’m your man.”

Instinctively, moved by fear, the life-long habit of obedience, even by her native modesty and courtesy, Phyllis held out her hand and took the money, with wondering eyes.

Devil Dick sprang to his feet, and hissed “Damnation!” but Grayhurst checked him with a peremptory gesture, and smiling, took the coins from Phyllis.

The stranger had returned to his place, and now took a seat at the table. Grayhurst followed him, and laying his hand on the man’s shoulder, set the money on the table before him, and looked him straight in the eyes.

There was an ominous silence for a minute or two, but the stranger made no sign.

Then Jekyll said, “Go on, Phyllis!” The girl looked to Grayhurst, who nodded to her pleas-

antly; and again, with her hands on her bosom, and very pale, she sang:—

“—Though that you do, it is no boot;
Although they cut me to the root,
Next year again I will be seen
To bud my branches fresh and green.
And you, fair maid, can not do so;
For when your beauty once does go,
Then will it never more be seen,
As I with my branches can grow green.

“The maid with that began to blush,
And turn'd her from the hawthorn bush;
She thought herself so fair and clean,
Her beauty still would ever grow green.

“But after this never I could hear
Of this fair maiden anywhere,
That ever she was in forest seen,
To talk again with hawthorn green.”

As the girl sang, the soldier toyed with the coins, seemingly unconscious or scornful of the American on guard; but when the last note was sung, and Phyllis lingered, trembling and confused, he suddenly strode over to her, and brutally thrust the money in her shuddering bosom.

There was a sound as of the sharp stroke of a hammer, and the fellow went down with his arms in the air, falling backward over a chair; then Devil Dick took up his cigar, interrupted for the moment, and went on smoking. Simon Dudder led Phyllis from the room, soothing her; and Grayhurst stood contemplating the carcass.

For several minutes the man lay unconscious. At last he opened his eyes, and tried to rise. The American raised him, and placed him in a chair. In falling he had cut his head against a corner of the table, and was bleeding freely. Grayhurst poured water on his own handkerchief, and bound it over the wound.

"Who struck me?" said the fellow. "What is your name?"

"Mr. Grayhurst. Who are you?"

"Frederick Vylke, and your betters. My father is Sir Hector Vylke."

"So much the worse for that noble family. Somebody has begotten a beast, and I hope you are a bastard. Now get up and go! or I'll throw you out into the road."

The man looked at the American—and went.

When the company, quite discomfited, had dispersed to their homes, and Jekyll, in a fiery mood, had mounted and spurred toward Wynhold, Grayhurst questioned the landlord when he came with the bed-room candle.

"This Sir Hector Vylke of the Castle, what is known of him, Toby?"

"Not much, sir. An offish party, as keeps hisself close; Staffordshire man; came to the title last year when his brother died, Sir Norman Vylke of Flecknoe as was. Then this Sir Hector, a widower, brought his establishment over here,

and just clapped the gates in the faces of the county people, as good as telling of 'em that their room was better than their company. But, Lord, sir! what could you expect? Sir Hector be'nt Midland quality; and they do say the Vylkes started in the pottery line,—beer mugs and tea-pots, and sich. There's a come-down for Flecknoe, sir—a crockery man a-snorin' in Richard the Third's bed!"

"And Richard was so very particular. But this soldier, is he really Sir Hector's son?"

"Ay, sir! I make sure he's the bad lot they tell of. Leastways, Bucky Boots says so, and Bucky he knows. Ruined a gamekeeper's pretty daughter, and got flogged with a dog-whip o' Sunday in the church porch; the gal's father did it. Stole away to London before his hide was healed; went plungin' on the turf; got among the Jews; took Sir Hector's name in vain on a bit o' queer paper; sharpened at cards at his club; got caught and thrashed again by 'a man of honor'—the sort that never gets caught, you know, sir; tried to hide hisself at home; but the governor met him at the stables, flung a check for a thousand in his face, kicked him from the kennels to the lodge, and cussed him clean out o' sight. Then a lot of men of honor took him up; and when they'd done with him, he was a blind-drunk British warrior, with the Queen's token in his fist—and that was all."

"And is it for the shame of this one that Sir Hector bars himself in at Flecknoe, or has he other brave boys?"

"A fat smile and a fat wink met on Toby's countenance, and seemed to have a confidential joke together, as he said, "If you'll kindly excuse me, sir, the matter of a minute;" and he left the room, only to return quickly, followed by a grinning bumpkin in a smock frock, with blacking on his nose.

"Tell Mr. Grayhurst your name, Bucky."

"Mr. Bucephalus Vylke, Esq.—Bucky for short, and no thanks."

"Who be your mammy, my lad?"

"Nan, the Bouncer, and a low lot."

"Now tell the gentleman who your father be."

Bucky Boots wagged one ear.

"Well?" said Grayhurst.

Bucky wagged the other ear.

Grayhurst appealed to Toby with a look.

"Spell out his noble name, my boy, and put in the flourishes."

Bucky wagged both ears—a vigorous and startling performance.

"Bucky, you may go," said Toby.

"Mr. Grayhurst, sir, there's only one other human creeter in all these parts that can do that; and that's Sir Hector Vylke."

The American rose, and took his candle.

"Blood will tell!" he said.

CHAPTER XI.

MISTRESS AND MAID.

IN the "goodly chamber" that had once been Cicely's, and now was hers, Barbara sat at the open casement in the forenoon, and fondled with her needle among the pretty nothings of ribbon and lace which were the familiar playthings of her fingers; while Phyllis, neat-handed and soft, moved from place to place among her lady's belongings, on serviceable cares intent. This apartment communicated, on the one hand, with the gallery and the buttress stair, and on the other with a dressing-room, formerly the peculiar snug-gery of Squire Marmaduke, who having "a pretty taste" for astronomy, was accustomed to pursue his studies here; and to this end he had connected the low window with the path that led to the stables, by a stationary ladder which still remained.

Thus, without disturbing his guests or alarming the maids, he could let himself out, as often as the humor seized him, to wander in the grounds, and, glass in hand, question the constellations. Here now was easy access, most inviting

to the midnight marauder; but that fine product of civilization was unimaginable to the stolid virtue of Yawdley and Ausibel; and besides, a brace of stout shutters, armed with a bar of iron, stood bravely for the eighth commandment; so Barbara slept without a panic.

In this room, when they were in retreat, mistress and maid became comrades, and the exactions of discipline were relaxed: an arrangement timidly accepted by Phyllis at the instigation of Barbara, who had said, "Elsewhere I know my place, and you know yours. But here let us be girls together; for whom have I but you? Poor old Pennyweight, she's but a pillar of salt, forever looking back; and Winifred—well yes, of course; but that is different, you know."

And to Phyllis, who did her thinking with her heart, this essentially feminine way of putting things was conclusive, the inconsequential "different" implying as much as a volume of differentiation could have expressed. So now they talked of the soldier's exploit at the inn—Barbara exploring, with a woman's keen and cruel probe, among the quivering feelings that underlay the brutal facts.

"And when he did that (Ugh! will *the place* ever be clean again?)—what did you do?"

Phyllis only shivered.

"Come here!" said Barbara. "Now tell me, dear—show me."

"What could I do, miss?—Oh, the shame, the strange shame of it!"

She moaned, and Barbara kissed her.

"Well! 'somebody knocked him down:' so easy to a little temper and a little muscle. There he was under your feet. *Then*, what did you do?—Cried, no doubt: the red reptile might have been hurt. But I would have wiped my shoes on his mouth as he lay. And after that I should have been ashamed to look you in the face, Phyllis; for I should have known that you were ashamed of me.—Now, who was Somebody?"

"I did not see, miss; I could not see; but they said it was Mr. Jekyll."

"No doubt; such opportunities come handy to him. He would have done as much for me, or the bar-maid. And Mr. Grayhurst, where was he?"

"Dolly said he raised the man, and placed him in a chair, and helped him kindly."

"What! that Yankee interloper?"

"And then called him a beast and a bastard, and pitched him out of the porch."

Barbara laughed, and clapped her hands.

"Ah! the original, ingenious darling! Dick, with his clumsy British methods, could only 'punch' the miscreant; but this American artist found a way to pillory and pelt his whole family.—But what became of the money?"

The girl drew a handkerchief from her bosom and unfolding it, showed the two half-crowns.

"At first," she said, "I forgot them ; but when I was undressing at bed-time I found them here."

Barbara stared : " And you actually put them back into your bosom, and kept them for your own ! Here's a ridiculous extinguisher truly to my fine fire-works. I'll give you a guinea for your five splendid shillings ; and then you can take them with my compliments to your two heroes, and we shall all have some fun."

"If you please, Miss Lynn," said the girl, (and her lips trembled), "I would rather keep them."

"But I tell you I will give you a guinea for them."

"I thought," said Phyllis, "I would like to drop these two half-crowns into the poor-box at church. I did not know what else to do with them."

Barbara covered her face with her hands, and so remained for some moments ; then she bowed over the girl's hand, and kissed it.

"Please don't !" said Phyllis. "You did not understand, miss ;—and you will not speak of this ?"

"Not even to Mr. Jekyll?"

"Oh ! No, no !"

"And why not ? Why should he care ?"

"Why should he care ?" repeated Phyllis. "He would have done as much for the bar-maid."

"You are a thousand times prettier than the bar-maid," said Barbara.

"Would the gentlemen thank you for saying

so, miss ? My father is only a poor plain man, but I'm sure he would never think of that. And oh ! but I'm glad he was not there."

" So are two men and a soldier, that we wot of ; and there is another who may be glad *he* was not there."

Phyllis looked puzzled : " Another ? "

" Angels and ministers of grace ! " cried Barbara, " but this is supernatural simplicity."

" Is it Kit, miss ? "

" Who should it be, but your love-lorn gipsy ? The two gentlemen were content to chastise that fellow neatly, after the fashion of their class ; your father would have belabored him painfully, after his fashion ; but Kit Abershaw would have murdered him."

" You can never be serious, miss ! Poor Kit is silly,—but wicked or dangerous ? Oh, no ! The Squire does praise him ; and Mr. Jekyll, he likes him well."

" And you and he are sweethearting, Phyllis."

" Not quite that, if I must explain. Poor Kit is fond on me, and foolish, and 'tis hard to make him see that I could never be his lover—only kindly like ; for he is good to me ; and often he is that lonesome and down-hearted, I am sorry. And 'tis a pity you should mistrusten him, miss, for he would serve you faithful."

" For your sake ? "

" For your own sake, and for Mr. Jekyll's."

"How does it concern Mr. Jekyll? For Mr. Thorpe's, you mean."

"He said for Mr. Jekyll's," said the girl simply; and Barbara changed the subject.

"Phyllis," she said, "does Abershaw quite understand that you care for him no more than you have expressed to me, just now?"

"Sweethearts, they kiss, Miss Barbara; and Kit never offers to kiss me. So by that I know he understands, though his fondness be stronger than his wits."

"Phyllis, did Mr. Jekyll ever kiss you?"

The girl winced, and turned pale, then flushed.

"Am I so common, Miss Lynn?"

"Oh no, dear! No, no! But 'tis a bad habit our gentlemen have—especially in the country, where it is so dull for them at this season. And Mr. Jekyll is apt to do startling things to amuse himself. I dare say he'd kiss me, if he imagined it might annoy Mr. Thorpe. So, if he should ever kiss you, dear, don't tell Abershaw; and if Kit should suspect and question you,—*lie, like an angel!*"

"But shall I tell you, miss?"

"Never!—that is, of course not. What is it to me?—Unless you think I might advise you. Yes, always come to me."

Here a full stop: both young women watching from opposite sides of the same thought, "I wonder if——."

"By the by," said Barbara, "Mr. Jekyll and Mr. Grayhurst seem to grow fonder of each other day by day: an odd thing in men; well nigh impossible, I fancy, if both were English."

"Ay! but 'tis a pleasant thing to see, miss. Father, he do say they be like hearty boys together."

"Like kinsmen, the Squire thinks."

"But kin they do nag so; and these are always kind."

"Yet one must take the lead. Which is it in this case?"

"My father says the Englishman always *takes* it, but the American always *gets* it."

"And the likeness, Phyllis!—they are alike. How, I cannot tell; it is not in face, nor in voice, nor in manner. When they are together, it is gone; but either, separately, reminds me of the other."

"Mayhap it be their *ways*, miss—such little ghostly signs as old folks love to find. Mrs. Judith, she did always say that Mr. Jekyll 'coaxed' like his grandfather; and now she do say that Mr. Grayhurst 'listens' like Squire Ralph. I call it just ghosting, miss—a fondness of the old, when they come close enough to the grave to look in."

"But when the spirits appear to you and me, that are young, Phyllis?"

"All the same, 'tis love, miss; and we just go ghosting."

"Go gnosting!" repeated Barbara, dreamily. "Just as my love goes ghosting, when I lie here at night, and see dead Cicely watching at this window for her bonny young Meriden, only to shiver and moan as her boozy Boulton comes floundering through the snow. If Meriden had only been a scamp and Boulton a vicar, the soft thing might have died in her bed, warm and respectable like me."

"I doubt 'twas dreams, miss. 'Twould be strange if you didna dream of the poor soul, with your young heart beating strong and joyful in the very room where her heart broke, so long and long ago."

"Oh, oh! you blind idiot!"

Phyllis stared, all consternation; and Barbara laughed:

"Oh! not you, dear; you are all eyes. I was thinking of Cicely."

"Ah! but if you could see her true and plain, as Bessie Mann did see her, that night at the lych-gate, your heart would just ache for the pity of it."

"And has Bessie taken to ghosting, too? I supposed she was of sterner stuff."

"That was her father's doings, miss—a hard, churchless man, always mocking abroad, and free with the strap at home; and he did bring his lass to think that a churchyard and a stone-quarry were all as one in the dark."

“But what did the girl imagine she saw?”

“The Snow Bride, at the lych-gate, tossing her cold white arms in her trouble, and filling her cold white bosom with snow.”

“With snow! on a fine moonlight night in June?”

“Could it ever be moonlight or June to her, miss?”

“But it must have been so to Bessie. Where did she find her snow?”

“In the story, miss; the snow is always falling in that cruel story.”

“Ah, Phyllis, Phyllis! May God deal with the man who would leave your heart out in the cold.”

The girl stood gravely silent; then she said:

“Bessie Mann, she will mock at ghosts no more; she did shiver and sigh and moan, poor thing, days and nights did she, till her father stormed, and promised her the strap, if ever he were shamed in the town with talk of her fooling; and so, for her sake, Janet Drum and me, we did hold our tongues. But Mr. Grayhurst, miss, how could he know?”

“Mr. Grayhurst!”

“He asked me once was Mann’s lass ill; and if she did want for aught I must come to him, he said.”

“Winifred! Grayhurst and Winifred — why not?”

"No, not to Miss Blythe, miss—to him, he said."

"And has Bessie come to her wits again?"

"She be bright enough in most ways. Only one thing troubles her; and that is strange, too, for Bessie were never silly."

"And what is that?"

"She says the poor lady had lost a pretty white ribbon, from the left sleeve of her gown."

"How did she know that?"

"There was such a bow on the other sleeve; and it troubles the lass more than all the horror and the fear. I doubt if she be right in her wits, miss."

But Barbara had risen, and was pacing the floor, restless.

"Yes," she said, "that is strange. I do not quite understand. There are bows of ribbon on the sleeves of a white gown of mine, in that chest of drawers. Get it; and let us see if she can mean a thing like that."

Phyllis brought the gown.

"A bow like this one, perhaps," said Barbara.

"I fancy 'twas, miss. And the other was gone—like this."

Barbara returned to the window:

"Perhaps there was no other," said she. "I forget what was the fashion of that period."

CHAPTER XII.

LADY GOODLUCK AT HOME.

CHRISTIE BREME, that homely handmaid, in whom ugliness and goodness strove, with forces so matched and mixed that one might say of her that her ugliness was lovely and her goodness grotesque—Christie had been to Yawdley on one of Lady Goodluck's pious errands ; and Winifred, taking the maid's place in the dairy, with sleeves rolled up to the elbows, had imparted the charm of her deft and dainty fingers to pats of golden butter, singing among the pans.

And now Christie had returned, bringing a child with her, Mutzie's bosom friend and Winifred's favorite trouble—all love and wilfulness, all tears and fun, a curly-pated epitome of surprises and problems.

" Oh, but she be fine and wicked ! " said Christie. " We mun just soap the mouth o' her, that foul it be—God forgie us ! "

" What did she say, Christie ? "

" *Dom it !* she says, bold as brass ; just *Dom it !* plump and plain as Balaam's ass—the kitten ! "

Winifred presented to the intent and wistful

gaze of the child, a mild little Vision of Judgment.

“Who taught you that, Maidie?”

The child’s lips quivered, and her small bosom trembled with the coming storm.

“’Twere Devil Dick,” said she.

With hands devoutly clasped, and heavenward squint, Christie stood like some disfigured saint:

“And she winna lie,” she said. “What’s a-comin’ now?”

“Mr, Jekyll would never be so bad, Maidie. He would not teach you wicked words.”

“Nay, but mine own self, I larned it, lady. All the same, ’twere Devil Dick; and he be gentry.”

“Tell me, Maidie; when was this?”

“’Twere yesterday, in the Manse lane. Jack and me we were playin’ in the road; and Devil Dick he comes clapperty-racket round the turn, and down the hill; and wow! down goes me, and up goes Devil Dick and his four hoofs—one, two, three, four!—I did count ’em, lady, in the air. Then that crazy horse he stands up straight on his two hind legs and dances; and Devil Dick he rolls off in the road, and runs to me, and *Dom it!* he says, fine and fierce like a soldier; and I laughed. Then he did feel my head, and my arms and my legs, and he did kiss me; and then he shook me good, and I cried; and then he kissed me again, and did give me a half-crown; and then

I did laugh, and say *Dom it!* and then he laughs and runs away, after his crazy horse. And that's all; and I want to say *Dom it!*"

"But 'tis ugly and wicked, and only ugly and wicked people say it."

"Oh, oh! Devil Dick he's an angel, and gentry too."

"But that was his temper, you know."

"Ay! I know; 'tis just heart-breakin'. And I'm sorry if it do get into the gentry even, poor things."

"Now mind me, Maidie! If you ever say *Dom it* again, I shall lock up Mutzie when you come to Brignal with your dreadful language; and I shall severely punish Mr. Jekyll."

Maidie was tearful and silent. Then she said, "I love Mutzie, and I love Devil Dick, and I would like to say *Dom it*; but you know best, lady; and so I will never, never! But oh! it's hard."

"Yes, dear, 'tis very hard; and you are my own good child to try so bravely. Now Christie shall wash your mouth, and then you may play with Mutzie."

A man's voice in the porch had caught Christie's ear, and now she returned from reconnoitring, with a face of news. It was only the Vicar, but Christie's face expressed carnage, pestilence and famine.

"'Tis just the Vicar, mum—God forgie me

and Mutzie; we ever do snap at his legs. 'Tis our own bad hearts, I doubt; and he clergy in holy orders. That it may please Thee to 'luminat' all priests and deacons, that both by their preachin' and livin' they may show it accordin'. Amen!"

"Amen!—Did Mutzie bite him?"

"How could she, poor thing, and he in top-boots? From the crafts and assaults of the Devil—Sure I'd go just so, mum; ye look sweet enough for a bishop."

And, "accoutred" as she was, ever neat and fresh and fragrant, with only the replacing of the sleeves over the shapely arms, Winifred went to receive her visitor, whom she found in the porch.

"I wonder at your garden, Miss Blythe—its profusion of various beauty. You have, I imagine, the horticultural idiosyncrasy."

"I fear those be but fine words for a plain matter, Mr. Thorpe."

"You prefer to term it luck, perhaps, or skill."

"Not luck, for I do not believe in that; nor skill, for I have but little, consciously. Suppose we call it love. I think I know the ways and wants of my flowers, as I know the moods of my friends—by loving them, and because they love me."

"Your friends, you mean."

"My flowers, I mean."

"Quite so! an amiable fancy, but not for plain prose."

"On the contrary, a familiar fact—a simple question, on the one hand, of food and drink and little friendly comforts, with tender nursing now and then; and on the other, of happy thriving, and grateful recompenses of color and fragrance."

"So that if you should leave home for a month, you imagine your flowers would be sorry?"

"Why not? I know they would suffer."

"But if it is, as you say, a simple question of food and drink, and the rest, would not another hand please them as well—engage their vegetable affections, to follow your pretty conceit?—even if the hand should not happen to be shapely, and soft and fair."

Winifred caught the man's eye, and coolly challenged him:

"The inference is that you admire my hands, Mr. Thorpe. But we were speaking of flowers; and I hoped to lead you beyond the rake and the watering-pot into the heart of the matter, what you call 'the rest of it:' that is, the love, the sympathy, and the tender nursing. Did you ever see a drooping plant?—a most pathetic object."

Thorpe supposed that a shrug and a smile would suffice for so light a question.

"Of course," said Winifred; "having two eyes,

and not being physically blind, you naturally imagine that you see whatever you may idly look at. That is the comfortable fallacy we all entertain, until we are led to look *into* things. Now, here was I, born and reared on a farm, and fondly fancying that I had often seen a cow or a rabbit."

"When it was only an ox or a cat, in the distance," said Thorpe.

"In the distance : thank you, yes; and it might as well have been a camel or a cow, until I drew near to it, to consider its ways, to commune with it, and to learn of it—insight, for example."

"Which is to suppose," said the Vicar, "that you have been more fortunate than that other amiable person who approached the study of natural history on your lines of observation. You will remember that she—it must have been a lady—never proceeded to cultivate the acquaintance of a dear gazelle, and to consider its ways, but when it came to know her well, and love her, it was sure to die ; which must have been very trying, seeing that at first, and at a distance, she could probably not distinguish a gazelle from a tinker's donkey."

"Now, that is very droll," said Winifred ; "the pathetic experience of that tedious young person becomes low comedy under your playful touch. Nevertheless, you never saw a drooping plant ; or

you mistook it for a weed, from your distance. I should like to show you one, but we have none at Brignal. You will find an interesting example, however, in a cottage at Yawdley."

"Is this another allegory, my lady? Some languishing parishioner, under the similitude of a wilted herb? It is all very well to be a good Samaritan, but why do you try to intercept me with a parable, as if you feared I would pass by on the other side?"

"There's no telling. You are such an *un*-certain priest."

Thorpe laughed: "If the Samaritan had said so good a thing, the priest would have staid to make his acquaintance, history would have felt the difference, and a Midland vicar, eighteen centuries later, might have had fair play. But who has been making a trip to Jericho?"

"I was thinking of the Widow Dale."

"The bed-ridden sister of that sentimental pedagogue, Silas Parr. Yes, that is an interesting case."

"So the Levite thought."

"Extreme affliction, I am told, with impressive courage and resignation."

"So the priest remarked, perhaps. Ah! Mr. Thorpe, if you would only give yourself fair play. But you leave your oil and wine in your closet."

Winifred rose and approached the steps, hearing Mutzie and the child in the garden, and the Vicar's

glance followed her thoughtfully. Then he changed the subject :

“Who is your small visitor, Miss Blythe?”

“Little Maidie Dale, the widow’s child. Perhaps it was her presence that brought the mother to my mind.”

“Ah! I remember—an engaging young heathen, with surprising accomplishments. I asked her once if she could say her creed, and she gave me an intrepid version of her own—a curious jingle of old Romish rhymes.”

“That must have been her Little Creed,” said Winifred.

“You know it then?”

“I learned it from Maidie; and it impressed me as quite a nice little creed for a bright little mind, struggling with big questions. Would you recognize it?—

“Little creed can I need.
Kneel before Our Ladie’s knee :
Candle light, candle burn ;
Our Ladie prayed to her dear Son,
That we may all to heaven come.
Little Creed. Amen !

“And you should hear her say grace over a bowl of bread and milk: no parrot-like performance—‘For what we are about to receive,’ and so on, mechanical and irreverent; but Herrick’s quaint and tender ‘Grace for a Child,’

delivered with a child's sincerity and understanding:

“Here a little child I stand,
Heaving up my either hand.
Cold as paddocks though they be,
Here I lift them up to Thee;
For a benison to fall
On our meat, and on us all.

“If the amiable Anacreon of the vicarage ever had a Maidie to say that grace for him, he must have rejoiced that he had the grace and sweetness to write it,” said Winifred.

“And you taught her that?”

“Not I; it was Mr. Grayhurst's happy thought.”

“Our Yankee Crichton—more admired than admirable, I suspect.”

“Which means that you do not admire him, Mr. Thorpe.”

“And that you do, Miss Blythe. But even I am not insensible to the versatility of his accomplishments. He flits on playful pinions between real life and fiction; and hovers, with a charm that is all his own, over other people's affairs.”

“I have heard him speak of you,” said Winifred, “in terms not only more generous but much less elaborate, quite as if he had never thought of them till then.”

“Then Mr. Grayhurst does not dislike me; that is kind.”

“I did not say that he does not dislike you;

and I am surely not at liberty to say that he does. He has not taken me into his confidence—even if he has determined the personal question in his own mind.”

“Quite so! If the man had taken any one into his confidence, I fancy his reception at Overstoke and Brignal might have been less reckless of those requirements of common prudence which are supposed to prevail in well-regulated communities.”

“Such as ——?”

“A challenge on the threshold: Who is he? *What* is he? And to what end does he pursue genealogical researches in remote English parishes, whereunto the Yankee adventurer has not hitherto penetrated?”

“Now those are pointed questions,” said Winifred; “why not apply them sharply to himself? In his alien ignorance he might object at first, but you will have the art to reconcile him to the demands of our national manners. Or why not question Jekyll? Probably Mr. Grayhurst is not aware that in an English parish the vicar is supposed to be everybody’s friend and confidant; and he may have hastened to unbosom himself to a reprobate. But you should not take the matter to heart.”

“If I had dreamed, Miss Blythe, that you had so taken to heart, not only the matter but the *man*, I would not have broken the silence that delicacy enjoins in such a case.”

The woman could not forbid the momentary

flush and pallor that betrayed her indignation, but the lady had her scorn under better control.

"The traditions of dignity," she said, "that should hedge the clergy are so impartial that the revelation of a ridiculous vicar must always appear more shocking than funny; and you are, at this moment, making yourself ridiculous, Mr. Thorpe."

The Vicar was for a moment thrown into confusion, but presently rallied and recovered his discretion.

"You take me too seriously," he said. "Nevertheless you are not wholly wrong. There is an endemic of folly, and you should not think it strange if I am infected, although the peculiar symptoms in my case may offend you. We have all been making ourselves ridiculous about this phenomenal mule-driver from the diggins. I think he said he had been a mule-driver; and we are quite prepared to believe that he was an artist, even in that unusual line; in fact, it would be a pleasure to see him driving mules now. But why the possession of so eccentric an accomplishment should be accepted as a patent of nobility, and a passport to our bed-rooms and our bosoms, is really more than I can explain—without incurring the risk of displeasing, not only the fair mistress of Brignal, but my enchanted friends at the Manor, and the enraptured tapsters and horse-boys at the inn."

"Well, let us leave those Ephraims to their

idol," said Winifred, "and turn to a less exasperating topic.—Mr. Jekyll, for example. Have you seen him? I have hoped he would call at Brignal to-day, and take a message for me to Wynhold."

"I fear we differ as to the degrees of exasperation," said the Vicar, rising to take his leave. "For my part, I place our friend with the diabolic affix, in the superlative decidedly."

"Truly the world goes wrong with you to-day. And what has our poor Dick been doing now?"

"Only letting himself loose again, to make night hideous; fooling with fire-arms under my windows; charging through toll-gates, with war-whoops, that only an American adept could have taught him; and clattering over Yawdley High-street at midnight, in a style that could not fail to impress the simple villagers with admiration for his fine animal spirits and his generous conception of manly sport."

"And this was last night? I am very sorry."

"Yes, you may hardly look for Mr. Jekyll to-day. No doubt he sweetly sleeps, after his interesting but exhausting exercises."

"Judy, dear," said Winifred, "what was it you said last evening?—that Mr. Grayhurst and Dick had met Simon Dudder in the road?"

"What dosto mean, dearie? Ay! I mind now. Simon, he did come upon the gentlemen riding Wynhold ways; and Maister Dick did bid

him pass the word to the inn people as they munna look for Mr. Grayhurst home back, seeing they two would bide the night at the Croft together."

"But for all that, Dick went 'tearing' as you call it, from Wynhold gate to Yawdley High-street at midnight; and now the Vicar spoils a day for me, with the folly and the shame of it."

"The Vicar he can spoil the sweetest Sunday that iver it took the Lord six days to make. But what is all this blather? Sure Mr. Grayhurst were wi' him; so it canna be."

"And why not? What do we know of Mr. Grayhurst?"

"Ah, my bonnie! Happen it's little to know, but much to feel. The likes o' him bring their letters in their faces, and find their friends where they bide. I'm fain to see the love that binds they lads to one another, and to thee; and if Maister Dick would do aught to trouble thee iver, it winna be when the American's a-by."

Winifred kissed the wrinkled cheek, and smiling turned away.

CHAPTER XIII.

KITH AND KIN.—PLAYING WITH FIRE.

BARBARA had gone with Jekyll to the lodge, with instructions for Kit Abershaw as to certain parcels, more or less precious, that were to come by the Bolingstone coach; and Grayhurst (ever a welcome guest at Overstoke) sat with the Squire in the library, and was entertained with the topic that never failed to engage his interest, the unfolding of the Shustoke chronicles.

“Yeoman, squire, lord of the manor, sheriff for the shire,” Grayhurst recapitulated; “but no Shustoke of high degree.”

“No: justices and gentlewomen at best; never a title, and never a black sheep—but one, and he was a vicar.”

“Unlucky in vicars!” said Grayhurst; “and who was *the other*?”

“The Reverend Jasper Shustoke: canon, chancellor, archdeacon, and chaplain to the Second George. He translated Æsop’s Fables, a respectable exploit that must have taken his acquaintance by surprise, seeing that he had scandalized a lady, Mistress Anna Maria Mordaunt, of whom he was

supposed to be enamored, by dedicating to her a licentious and bombastic paraphrase of the Song of Solomon. It is not elating to read that, as a divine, Jasper Shustoke was entitled to no respect; and that he owed his luck in church preferments to his political odes and satires."

"Jekyll has told me of the Reverend Jasper," said Grayhurst; "and regarding him as a baleful luminary in the otherwise beneficent system of Shustoke, I have found him so interesting that I have followed his trail through the memoirs, in the hope of accounting for him, according to genesis. Do you know who his mother was?"

"One Mistress Philippa Progers, I believe."

"And who was Progers?"

"An officer of the household of Charles the Second—whatever that may signify. We have no more personal account of him."

"Ah, now," said Grayhurst, "I may mount my faithful hobby, and prance triumphantly. Edward Progers had been page to Charles the First, and was made groom of the bed-chamber to the Prince of Wales, to whom that apartment was important, you remember. In his official capacity Progers became the confidant of the Merry Monarch, and ministered to the royal caprices with equal zeal and finesse. Elizabeth Wells was one of that delectable group of damsels whose portraits, sketched with a free hand, adorn the pages of Pepys and Grammont:—maids of honor, they

were styled in the broad humor of that period; or king's mistresses, when no joke was meant. His Majesty was not ungrateful, and for his delicate functions the superserviceable Progers was rewarded with the hand of the compliant Wells, who being stupid and 'looking sheepish,' although she 'walked like a goddess,' had begun to hang heavy on the royal hands. Hence your Philippa Progers, who came upon the scene with some precipitation, and disclosed in time a family likeness to the king, so remarkable that everybody, except her mother, noticed it. When Philippa became Mistress Shustoke, she seems to have done her best to commemorate what she owed to Charles the Second, by transmitting his gifts and graces to the Reverend Jasper Shustoke: *quod erat demonstrandum.*"

"Neatly put!" said the Squire; "but hardly, I should have supposed, in the American line of research."

"You little know us, Squire. Every other American in England is a Japhet in search of his forefathers, and nothing in the nature of pedigree is foreign to him. But now, sir, tell me of the Curzons. What is the tie between the Shustokes and Curzons?"

"That is, between Winifred and me," said the Squire, smiling slyly, as Grayhurst studied intently the pattern of a rug.

"True," he said; "the question in that form

has more of personal interest ; and Miss Blythe, I suppose, represents the Curzon connection."

"Yes, Winifred's mother, Ruth Curzon, a gentlewoman of the finest type, could trace her descent in the direct line from Roger de Curzon, who held the Crochesalle lands at the Domesday Survey. I have your interest in hereditary, Grayhurst ; and at times I entertain myself with the fancy that I discover in the mind and temper of our dear Winifred—in her serious enthusiasms and her persuasive loyalty—traces of the influence of Joyce and Mary Curzon."

"The names are new to me," said Grayhurst ; "what influence do they suggest?"

"A grim one in the case of Joyce, for she was burned at the stake in the reign of Bloody Mary. She was the daughter of Thomas Curzon of Croxall. The intrepid heretic is described as a lady of superior presence and daintily nurtured, addicted to gay apparel, and such like vanities.

"Mary Curzon, Countess of Sackville, was governess to the children of Charles the First, and discharged her trust with such prudence and tender devotion that both Houses of Parliament voted her a public funeral at her death, and she was buried with much pomp in Westminster Abbey, although her husband was an impetuous royalist ; and royalists were becoming unpopular.

"Katharine, another daughter of Sir George Curzon of Croxall, married Gilbert Thacker,

grandson of that infamous Thomas Thacker who, as steward of Cromwell, Earl of Essex, figured as a clever tool in the scandalous business of suppressing the Religious Houses; and in 1654 Dorothy Thacker was married to Randolph Shustoke of Overstoke, in holy orders.

"Thus you get the connection between Shustokes and Curzons; and we are happy in having, in the gracious mistress of Brignal, a charm to 'kepe kyn kinde'. As for my American namesakes, I have heard my father say that a Shustoke of Wynhold emigrated in the reign of George the First."

"No doubt the original Maryland Richard," said Grayhurst, "whom I find in the Wynhold register, enrolled as a great-grandson of your Randal and Mary. That is the only glimpse I get of him here; but in the notes of my friend Julian Shustoke he reappears in Maryland, and marries Johanna Carden."

"Johanna! did you say?"

"Johanna. Is not the name English?"

"Yes, though uncommon. But it is the coincidence that impresses me. Jekyll's mother, born at Wynhold, was a Johanna."

"I have another coincidence for you, my dear sir, which you will find more impressive. A grandson of Richard and Johanna sailed from Baltimore for France, but with the purpose of making his way to Yawdley and Overstoke, in

search of his grandfather's people. The ship must have foundered at sea, for no tidings ever came of crew or passenger; like the 'Jolly Briton' in Sydney Dobell's ballad—

“‘How's my boy—my boy?
What care I for the ship, sailor?
I was never aboard her,
Be she afloat or be she aground,
Sinking or swimming, I'll be bound
Her owners can afford her!
I say, How's my boy?’
—“‘Every man on board went down,
Every man aboard her!’

“Squire, that boy's name was Devil Dick Shustoke.”

“Well, here I am again!” cried Jekyll, running in merrily. “You must have thought I was lost.”

Neat-handed Phyllis, her light labors done, sat at the window in Barbara's chamber and surveyed the peaceful prospect, looking abroad over the ancestral farms, topping bosky eminences; over the cunning cottages, set upon heathy knolls; over the fragrant herbage, flecked with loitering cattle and sheep; over the sober homesteads, embosomed in the farther vale; over the burnished breast-plate of the mere, and the crested woods of Brignal Hurst, and the glancing course of Giddyburn; over the twin towers that flanked

the grim gate of Flecknoe ; and beyond, to where the penciled spires of Ausibel and Yawdley lifted high their aureoled crosses ;—and all that Phyllis saw was a man and a woman idling in the grass.

Not by any defect of vision, for hers were the eyes of a rural maid, trained to great country scopes, and quick to discover a familiar face on the box of the Ausibel coach as it turned the edge of the wood at Wynhold, a mile beyond the lodge. But now she had set their focus by the quest of her heart, to read by distant signals of lips and hands the words she could not hear. And this was what she noted :

On a knoll beyond the mere, where a dead tree had been felled, Barbara sat on a stone, her back against the prostrate trunk, her garden hat tossed in the grass beside her ; while Jekyll, stretched on the sward supine, lay with his hands locked under his head, and watched the sailing clouds, as he listened shrewdly to the disclosures of his companion—an eager spring of talk, running brook-like, and like a brook capricious.

The spot was secluded, and treacherous by its very seclusion ; for the thicket of privet that screened it on the three sides, from the highway and the avenue and the footpath by the mere, betrayed it by a cunning vista to the one window where now two steadfast eyes were trained upon it. And the maid at the window, watching her lady at the mere, ‘took down’ in the stenography

of her own emotions and instincts the language of movement and gesture: the fine action of the head—now proudly poised, now petulantly tossed in pretty jerks like a fowl's, now fixed in a plaintive repose; the sensitive responses and eager insistence of the hands—now clasped, now clenched, now playfully parted, all fist or all fingers.

Presently the girl, *listening* more and more intently, discovered a familiar pantomime, and began to interpret it, as Barbara, gazing skyward and stretching forth her hands, opened and closed them, with the action of one who catches something that is softly falling; and Jekyll, changing his posture, reclined in an attitude of roused attention, and followed her doings and her words. It was as though she filled her hands with snow, now from the air, now from the ground, and hid it in her bosom, again and again folding it there, fondling it there, as if it were some naked helpless thing. Now she arose, and moved a few paces away from Jekyll, gliding in a solemn ghostly fashion, and slowly waving her arms aloft; then suddenly she turned, clapping her hands merrily, as she ran to throw herself on the grass again, laughing;—and Phyllis, shuddering, turned away.

“Ah! however can a lady be so hard, so evil?—to mock that pitiful story. And 'twas I that told her; and it made me cry. Better be soft and foolish like us, than clever and cruel, like that.”

“Oh! oh!” she cried, “oh, see!”—as Barbara produced a bow of white ribbon, and placing it on her right sleeve at the elbow, displayed it to Jekyll; then changing it to the other arm, and holding it there for a moment, she let it fall in the grass. Jekyll, who was now all attentive and alert, seemed to question her; and she replied as one perplexed, with roving glances searching in the grass.

Phyllis started from her place, stirred and troubled by a sudden fancy; then she went quickly to the chest of drawers, and took out the white dress that Barbara had asked for when first they talked of the ghost. One ribbon had been missing from its sleeve then; now the other was gone. When she returned to the window, the ribbon was in Jekyll’s hand; and the maid, watching her mistress’s face, saw misgiving in the eyes, saw the lips form “Phyllis.”

“At such a distance—absurd!” you say, being only a man; but the women know better. At church, last Sunday, I marked two girls, evidently familiar friends, who were separated by a broad aisle and a row of pews. One of them spoke to the other, contriving a coherent question with a pretty trick of lips and eyes; and the mute response came back, prompt, particular and conclusive.

“Phyllis!”—Had the thought of the maid flown straight to the mistress? As for Jekyll, he rose

yawning and stretching himself, with artful languor, thrust the ribbon into his pocket, took up the garden hat, and led the way by the foot-path toward the lodge.

Abershaw was there with the packages. He had just now brought them from the inn, and was about to take them to the house.

"Handle this box carefully," said Jekyll; "it is a barometer."

"And give both your hands and all your mind to this one," said Barbara; "it is a wedding-dress for Phyllis."

The barometer slipped from Kit's hands, but he caught it on his knee. Jekyll, staring at Barbara, did not perceive the man's clumsiness; and Barbara observed that he did not observe it. The man, staring at the *other* box, said, "That's a lie!"

Barbara laughed.

"What's that?" cried Jekyll, turning on him fiercely.

"I said 'twere a lie, sir," said Kit. "Them as told you so, mistress—my humble service to you always—be just liars."

"How do *you* know?" said Jekyll.

"Why should *you* care?" said Barbara. "There! what folly! Of course I was jesting."

CHAPTER XIV.

A GROUP.—“YOU AND I.”

ON the morrow, Jekyll, who had breakfasted with the Squire, joined Barbara in her morning walk, and they took the field-path to Brignal. They found Winifred engaged with two of the cottage children, a boy and a girl, who had come for their customary dole of broth and curds, and whom Mutzie had beguiled to romp with her. For this particular delegation, from her exacting constituency of small clients, Lady Goodluck had resources of entertainment, narrative and lyrical, from which they never failed to extract fresh charms to console and sweeten their shock-headed and bare-footed dispensation. A metrical and highly concentrated version of the “Babes in the Wood” was their favorite form of rapture; for this they would promise largely—superfluous ablutions, for example, painful abstinence from bird-nesting, fatiguing continuance in prayer—until to the business and bosom of their benevolent friend the conviction struck home that those foliated orphans had not died in vain; and so she would gratefully set the heart-rending machinery going:—

My dear, do you know,
How a long time ago
Two poor little children,
Whose names I don't know,
Were stolen away
On a fine summer's day,
And left in a wood,—
So I've heard people say.

And when it was night,
So sad was their plight,
The sun it went down,
And the moon gave no light.
They sobbed and they sighed,
And they bitterly cried ;
And the poor little things
They lay down and died !

And when they were dead,
The robins so red
Brought strawberry leaves,
And over them spread ;—

“ But that was all a mistake,” Jekyll interrupted, suddenly appearing from behind the screen of vines ; “ those stupid birds made a lot of trouble, with their leaves and fuss. The fact is, you see, the Babes were not dead at all ; that is, not in the real dead-and-gone funeral way, but just a lee-tle dead, for the time being—*you* know, Jack.”

Jack nodded briskly, and beamed with intelligence. He had enjoyed the luxury of woe which the authorized version afforded, but here was the

charm of novelty, and the possibility of startling views supported by high authority. But the girl shrank from the glare of critical demonstration, and took refuge in Lady Goodluck's arms as from false doctrine, heresy and schism.

“You see,” continued Devil Dick, “there chanced to be a gentleman passing through the wood just about that time—a handsome gentleman, like me.”

The children made no sign.

“A noble, virtuous gentleman, like me.”

Jack and Kitty only stared; they could not see what all this had to do with their babes and robins.

“A rich, kind gentleman, like me,” said Jekyll, producing some pennies.

The audience was stirred with small motions of excitement. Kitty put her finger in her mouth, and Jack giggled.

“And this handsome, noble gentleman found those babes asleep under the leaves; and he shoo'd the birds away, and spanked the babes for soiling their high-priced clothes; and he picked the leaves and straws out of their hair, and gave them sixpence—two sixpences, like these—and told them to run along home to their nice rich relations, and have broiled robins for supper; *and they did*. Now take your blood-money and run, you mercenary darlings!”

“Dick dear,” said Winifred, “do you find that those children understand you?”

“Perfectly, your ladyship; my system is infallible.”

“Oh! you have a system?”

“Always. Object-teaching in this instance: from sixpence to draw an inference. Next time I meet those disheveled young sycophants, they will grapple with my legs, and beg me to tell them about the *handsome* gentleman and the broiled robins. Here comes Barbara, with Grayhurst. We met the American in the lane, and I supposed it was the correct thing to appear surprised, delighted, and the rest of it; but that guileless simpleton frustrated my amiable deceit by remarking that Brignal lane is his favorite stroll, and that he finds its peculiar charm more and more impressive as he approaches the house. Quite ingenuous, I thought; but Barbara clapped her hands and laughed, and said nothing: all in that inscrutably idiotic way which is supposed to be big with meaning.”

“And the meaning was big enough to speak for itself. Good morning, Barbara! good morning, Mr. Grayhurst. Dick tells me you have been praising my pretty lane.”

“Is that unusual? I can imagine no more inspiring ramble in all England than Brignal lane from the highway to the house.”

“Delightful!” said Winifred. “That compliment shall be your passport; and you shall have the right of way, when inspirations are in season.”

“And thou hast all seasons for thine own,” said Barbara. “More favored than our poor Caryl; the inspirations he gathers here are usually hard and sour; but then he prefers the view toward the highway.”

“I accept your metaphor,” said Winifred; “for if inspirations were green plums, and the Vicar gathered and devoured them as he approached the house, his temper when he arrives might be less trying—a mere matter of pepper drops and ginger-tea.”

“Happy adjustment of terms!” said Barbara, laughing. “And you must have prescribed for him pungently at his last visit.”

“So! he has been telling you; but then he brought his grievance from the Manse, and had kept it over night. Some one had been roystering under his windows at midnight: war-whooping, I think he said; and rough-riding through Yawdley High-street afterward, to the scandal of all well-regulated parishioners.”

“What nonsense!” said Barbara. “The man had nightmare.”

“Did he say ‘some one?’” inquired Jekyll.

“I claim the war-whoops,” said Grayhurst.

“Did he say ‘some one?’” repeated Jekyll.

“‘Let the galled jade wince!’” said Winifred, evading the question. “Here’s a fine uproar truly. Why not move upon the Manse in a body, and challenge the Vicar?”

"Name! name!" cried the American.

"Grayhurst, then," said Winifred demurely.

Barbara was startled; but Jekyll caught the fun.

"Alas!" said Grayhurst, "my war-whoop betrayed me—my own, my native whoop. When we fondly imagine we may pass for a sort of home-spun English, we are everywhere detected by our peculiar cry."

"But seriously, Winifred," said Jekyll, "when was this shocking business?"

"On Thursday night."

The two men exchanged glances, and then joined in a hearty laugh.

"On that night," said Jekyll, "my disreputable den at Wynhold was the scene of a wild orgie. This howling Comanche and I held high revel at the Croft; we had grilled bones and pipes and flowing bowls; and we surpassed each other in blood-curdling legends and profane minstrelsy, and games of unimaginable iniquity; and when old Nanny Cole came trembling to bring us our candles, the air of the room burned blue. It was while we were sunk in the sleep of stupefaction that some mercurial sprite was trying to amuse the gentle parish priest."

"Possibly some tipsy lad from Ausibel," said Grayhurst, "pursuing fun on a private system of his own, suggested by the finer flights of the Texan cow-boy."

“Reduce that to a cow in a garden, and a fine flight of clerical fancy,” suggested Jekyll.

“And then resolve the fine flight into an indigestion,” said Barbara; “and all that remains of the rough-riding roysterer and his war-whoops is a curried fowl with cucumbers at bed-time, and a vicar’s nightmare.”

“Dick dear,” said Winifred, speaking low, apart from the others, “Mr. Grayhurst’s conjecture is evidently honest guess-work; but you and Barbara are overdoing your raillery. The man *did* charge through the toll-gate, and *did* startle the High-street at midnight. Who was it?”

“Surely, Winifred, you do not suspect me still.”

“I have never suspected you. I know it was not you. But who was it?”

“Not I, nor Grayhurst, nor any man we know. Some senseless frolic, my lady.”

They were interrupted by Barbara, who had gone in pursuit of a great emperor-butterfly, that hung above a rose, and grandly fanned the flower with its emblazoned wings.

“Oh! what a beauty!” she cried. “Come, Dick, and catch him for me—quick, quick!”

Grayhurst had already answered her call; and Jekyll, who was noted for a certain dexterity in taking these tender creatures, drew his handkerchief from his pocket, and ran to join the chase; as he did so, something fell from his hand, and Winifred picked it up—a bow of white ribbon!

“Mr. Grayhurst,” she cried, “those people are breaking a Brignal law. Protect my chartered libertine!”

Then she retired for some minutes into the house; when she re-appeared, the captured butterfly was impaled upon a card, and the three culprits, grouped in the porch, were exploring its curious splendors. Winifred joined them, and leaning on Jekyll’s shoulder, followed his interesting demonstration.

That ended, Barbara invited her companion to continue their walk to Yawdley; and Jekyll, with that thoughtful kindness it was his whim to hide, said—

“Produce the plunder, my lady. There’s sure to be a bundle or a basket or a bottle or a box, or something else beginning with a b, for some pampered impostor of yours. Ah! bundle this time,” as Winifred, laughing, brought a parcel from the hall— “for Mrs. Dale, the ingenious bed-ridden. Small gowns no doubt, and hose and pinafores for that precocious little hussy who does sums in arithmetic lying on her back in the road, and counting horse-shoes in the air. I’m coming, Barbara! of course you will wait for the bottle, Grayhurst; the favored disciple always gets the bottle.”

As they passed the wicket and took the path through the Hurst, the American, lingering with Winifred in the garden, watched them thought-

fully; and Lady Goodluck, waiting silently, followed his thoughts.

“Miss Blythe,” he said presently, “you commanded me to be Jekyll’s friend.”

“Commanded? Oh, no! I dearly wished it might be so.”

“Ah, well! that is but a choice of terms that signify the same thing. The office is one I would have chosen, but you chose me for the office, and so made it a distinction; because, whether you intended so much or not, you admitted me to that extent to your confidence. You grant that?”

“Why not? My purpose was a serious one, and my choice deliberate. If you find in that assurance anything to flatter you, it is you who are flattering me without knowing it. So, welcome to my confidence!”

“Well then, to begin—what is Miss Lynn?”

“You put your question oddly; or did you mean to say *who*?”

“Not I; we all know that the young lady is Squire Shustoke’s niece; but *what* is she, to Jekyll or to you?”

“Would it not be more to the purpose to ask, what is she to Mr. Caryl Thorpe?”

“On the contrary, that question is, I imagine, to so little purpose that a very dull person may answer without assistance—that Miss Lynn is of a certain value to Mr. Thorpe at market rates, and that Mr. Thorpe is less than nothing to Miss Lynn

in the light of sentiment. But Miss Lynn, being quite free, I am told, to choose where she will, is going to marry a man whom she detests. That is one of the elements that render the case interesting; but there are others: in much that the lady says and does, in more that she does *not* say or do, one may find food for thought. I am curious to account for Miss Lynn, on genealogical principles."

"You do not dislike Barbara, Mr. Grayhurst?"

"Indeed no! She attracts me strangely. At times I find myself regarding her with actual sympathy and solicitude, such as I cannot explain to myself. If she should detect it, she would probably resent it as an impertinence."

"I think," said Winifred, "you have the penetration that goes with a sensitive temperament; mere sophisticated observation might have misled you. The sympathy you feel is for the *other* Barbara."

"A riddle?"

"Yes. It is a riddle we are discussing. Barbara is duplex; there are two of her: one, the conventional, even common-place, English girl whom I have known—as we imagine we know our familiars—from our childhood; always modest, always ingenuous, often wilful, often winsome, with the stock virtues and the stock foibles that go to the making of that sort of 'nice girl' whom everybody knows."

“And the other?”

“The antithesis in each particular of our Barbara: erratic, where she was conventional; daring, where she was diffident; flighty, where she was demure; guarded, where she was simple and frank; deliberate and politic, where she was capricious and wilful; restless and impatient in a life of perfect peace; petulant without provocation, and excited by invisible and unimaginable disturbances.”

“And when did this changeling appear on the scene?”

“It is about a twelve-month since I began to observe in Barbara these freaks of mood and impulse, as if she were tormented by the imp of the perverse.”

“An English girl that hath a devil!” murmured Grayhurst, again recalling Jekyll’s description, the day they rode together in Flecknoe Park and talked of the Vicar.

Winifred caught the words, but let them go, unchallenged.

“But her moods were not demonstrative—there was never a scene; and although they did not quite escape the dear Squire’s anxious eyes, he only called them symptoms, and consulted me; and I pronounced it a mild case of love, complicated with temper: a diagnosis which he accepted as conclusive, because it amused him. Then *he* prescribed the Vicar.”

“And how did the patient take the dose?”

“Like a lamb! and grew worse from that time.”

“Miss Blythe, I think I discover in this case interesting indications of congenital taint. Let us call the parents, as the lawyers say.”

“Ah, now you are mounted,” said Winifred, “with a pillion on your hobby for me! Well, the mother first. She was Mildred Shustoke, the Squire’s sister as you know, some seven years younger than he. I have told you that Barbara resembles the portrait of Cicely at Overstoke. She inherits the likeness from her mother, who is said to have reproduced in a remarkable degree the physical and mental characteristics of the Snow Bride—her pale pensive beauty, her gentle, tranquil ways, her softness and her shrinking. There were times, when Barbara was yet in the school-room, when her mother moved and spoke in her. Then the Squire, regarding her thoughtfully and fondly, would whisper ‘Mildred!’

“When Mildred was entering her nineteenth year her health was delicate, and she fell into morbid, melancholy ways. The inevitable ‘change’ was prescribed, of course, and she was sent to her mother’s people, the Aldridges of Great Barr. It was in the hunting season, and there was a gathering at the Hall of gay and good-looking earth-cum-berers and time-killers. Among them was Carrick Lynn, of the Lynns and Carricks of Stafford; a man whom women preferred, because he had the art to recommend them to themselves, and to set

himself up in their imaginations, assigning to each her own particular Carrick. Not ‘a ladies’ man,’ as we understand that term, for he was accomplished and intrepid in all manly sports. How often have I heard him described in the peculiar jargon of his class! But the men were shy of him; there had been some very crooked lines, they said, in his career; he knew the cards too well, ‘for a gentleman;’ drank too cautiously, ‘for a gentleman.’ I once heard Squire Randal say that there were even certain bitter women who pronounced Carrick Lynn too handsome, for a gentleman; too agreeable, for a gentleman—especially after he had married Mildred Shustoke.

“He took his bride to the continent; and excepting two brief visits to Overstoke, when it was observed that the lady was either mute and sorrowful or restless and excited—passing capriciously, almost hysterically, from the one mood to the other—they lived abroad always. He wrote with enthusiasm of the noble draught-horses of Normandy; he had bought an interest in a great breeding-farm near Rouen, and was ‘giving all his time and thoughts to this fascinating pursuit;’ and she wrote of indifferent matters, in a measured tone that betrayed dictation, and with trouble between the lines.

“Barbara was born at Dieppe. When she was five years old, her mother died. Mildred’s last letter to her brother, written in French by her

nurse, one of the good angels of the Bon Secours, commended the child to his love and protection, and contained not one word of allusion to her husband. Below her name, most painfully formed by the dying hand, the sister had written, *Qui a le coeur brisé*. Through some error in the French superscription that letter was many weeks in reaching Overstoke. The Squire, repairing to the scene in haste, found Mildred's grave at Rouen; but her husband had disappeared with the child, leaving no trace. When he thought to find some friend of Lynn's, he was gravely referred to a notorious *croupier*.

"Two years later, a kind-hearted English couple brought Barbara, then in her eighth year, to Bolingstone, where the Squire found her. She had been consigned to their charge at Dieppe, by her father—'such a handsome, pleasant gentleman!'—to whom they had been recommended for this service by a *commissionnaire*. The child brought a letter, which she would suffer no one to touch until she had placed it in her uncle's hand. It was from Lynn, to the Squire—brief and to the point:

"'This is Mildred's child. Love her, for your sister's sake; and teach her to forget her father. She is an orphan now.—CARRICK LYNN.'

"It was afterward ascertained that, on taking leave of his child, he had burned his papers and shot himself: a broken and desperate gambler!

“No one thought of teaching Barbara to forget her father; but she taught herself to put his memory out of her life. I never dare to imagine in what a school the child must have been trained in the two years, between two tragedies, that she passed with him—motherless. I never dare to imagine all the infamous precocities she must have tried to forget since that time.”

“It is as I suspected,” said Grayhurst, “and your double Barbara is explained. Here, at Overstoke, her memory and imagination have walked in peaceful places, seeking rest; but the spirits of Mildred Shustoke and Carrick Lynn have crept, by turns, into their old abode, and found it swept and garnished. As one departs, the other enters; and you have shown me that the last state of that girl has been worse than the first. Verily, it behooves us to look to the manner of our living, seeing that we never wholly die to those we beget. In that light, the case of Miss Lynn has its accusing aspect; in any light a most pathetic claim, and our hearts can not escape from it. What can we do for her?”

“Watch her, guard her—you and I.”

“You and I!—You and I!”

How the man’s voice was changed!—low now and eager. Winifred, blushing, turned away, and crossed the garden path to pluck a flower; the American, standing there, only followed her with his eyes.

“Mr. Grayhurst, find the Vicar’s night-rider; and when you are sure of him, tell no one but me.”

Meanwhile, Jekyll and Barbara had made the rounds of the village, and returning by the avenue, approached the house: they were speaking of the churchyard.

“It is not there,” said Jekyll; “I searched in every spot—in the road, at the lych-gate, in all the paths and among the tombs. If it was lost *then*—and you are not sure—some of the cottage people have found it.”

As he spoke, he drew a ribbon from his pocket and she quickly concealed it in her dress, as he took his leave, departing toward the lodge.

Regaining her room, Barbara closed the door and threw the ribbon on a couch.

As she did so, she uttered a low cry of astonishment and consternation:—

Both ribbons were there!

CHAPTER XV.

LOST AT SEA.—DOLLY ON GUARD.

IT was the Squire's "Maryland hour," as he was wont to term those receptive sittings of an afternoon, when ensconced in his great chair, a revelation of pure comfort, he fondly dallied with his pipe, and let the American run on, in that soft smooth flow of the talk he loved to hear. Of Richard Shustoke of Wynhold, bustling on the banks of the Severn, and preparing to erect an American lineage on a foundation of wheat and tobacco, crude iron and water-power; of his marriage with Johanna Carden, whose name stands for distinctions of civic credit and renown; of their place in the courtly companies of Annapolis; of the later home of the widow in the seclusion of Garrison Forest, with her three sons, Richard, and James Carden, and Charles; and of that son of Charles (to the Squire more interesting than all the rest), the wild lad who was lost in the *Favorite*—Devil Dick.

"Surely lost?" the Squire questioned.

"That is the story, sir. No tidings ever came of him; his mother mourned him, and a stone in

the private cemetery of the Shustokes, at Garrison Forest, records the manner of his death: 'Lost at Sea'."

"Who placed the stone there?"

"His mother."

"And she mourned him long?"

"To the day of her death, although she survived him four years."

"And yet, Mr. Grayhurst, you have seen Richard Shustoke's tomb in Overstoke churchyard; and I may almost say that he walks and talks with you, in the person of his own grandson. But that does not surprise you?"

"How could it? The very name, Devil Dick, met and seemed to welcome me, before I first alighted from the coach at the inn. Then Miss Blythe—"

"The lad's good angel!" said the Squire.

"Thinking to enlist a loyal friend for Jekyll, told me the story of his grandfather, from the time of his appearance at Ausibel, and his mysterious adoption by Squire Marmaduke. Since then your own significant inquiries from time to time, joined to the Maryland story, have completed the clew; for I knew you had inherited the secret of the stranger's identity, and I have waited for the time when Devil Dick himself might commend me to your confidence."

"And that time has come," said the Squire.

"The secret, kept by my grandfather, my father

and myself, may justly fall to you, by right of those whom you represent.

“ The *Favorite* ran into a hurricane off the coast of France; her foremast was carried away, and she sprang a leak, that gained upon the pumps from the start. The ship was doomed, and there was no hope but in the two life-boats. One of those was torn from the davits and stove, and the full crew was more than the other could carry. Three men must be left to take their chances in the sea; and some spars and casks were lashed, to make a raft for them. Then lots were drawn on equal terms for all hands; and the risks of the raft fell to the second mate, the carpenter, and a sickly boy who had never been at sea before. Devil Dick put the boy into the boat, and would have taken his place on the raft; but the captain, who was Shustoke’s kinsman, dragged him to the launch. Then Devil Dick sprang into the sea, and with the help of the mate and carpenter made good his footing on the raft.

“ Before her crew had pulled a hundred strokes the boat was swamped, and every man was lost; but the buoyant raft swam on. Provisioned with a bag of dried beef and biscuit and a cask of water, and flying a signal of distress they had contrived to rig, those three clung to their desperate craft and drifted like sea-weed. On the third day, the mate became delirious, and laughing horribly, threw himself into the sea. One day more, and

the carpenter, exhausted and dazed, rolled off the side, like a man who turns in his sleep. Then Devil Dick ate freely of the beef, took a full draft of water, lashed himself as securely as he could, and waited.

“He died there, he said, and came to life again on board an Italian bark bound for Genoa. He must have been insensible when they picked him up; but he always maintained that Devil Dick Shustoke died on that raft, and that the man who assumed the name of the poor ship-boy he had tried to save, and so made his way from Genoa to Marseilles, from Marseilles to London, from London to Ausibel and Overstoke, was raised from the dead, into another life, another world, another name.

“In a sailor’s canvas belt he had brought on his body his money and all his papers: papers that served to install him in the confidence and affection of Squire Marmaduke—and money enough (so profuse had his doting mother been) to maintain him in the modest circumstances of a country gentleman, until my grandfather could persuade him to use his very liberal letter of credit on a banking-house in London. At last that was managed discreetly, through the Squire’s solicitors; and then the young man wrote to his mother. Of that letter—which was addressed by Squire Marmaduke, and warily posted under cover to one of the Cardens of Annapolis—nothing was ever

known, save the strange promise he exacted: that the lost should remain forever lost to his people in Maryland, a foundling concealed in the remoteness and obscurity of his ancestral parish. We know that his mother accepted the hard condition, and kept his secret locked in her heart; for it was only on those terms that she could hope to hear from the lad who had committed his wild life to the depths, and suffered the great sea-change. You say there is a stone to his memory at Garrison Forest; how is it inscribed?"

"Very simply," said Grayhurst: "LOST AT SEA: RICHARD SHUSTOKE: BORN AT GARRISON FOREST, APRIL 4, MDCCLIX:—RESURGAM!"

"*Careful* simplicity!" said the Squire. "The '*Resurgam*' may have had a significance other than spiritual, looking for its fulfilment in the flesh. I wonder when that stone was erected—before or after she had heard from him!"

"However that may be, the lady corresponded with her son, under cover to Squire Marmaduke; and for four years he received stated remittances from her, amounting to £1500 a year. Then came a letter from her physician, addressed to Marmaduke Shustoke of Overstoke, advising him that Mistress Rebecca Shustoke of Garrison Forest had been called to her final rest, and had departed in sweet peace, leaving her solemn blessing to the household at Overstoke, 'and to all who are held dear under that honored roof.'

“The remittances ceased at her death ; but young Shustoke had lived prudently, and had left £4000 with my grandfather. To this the Squire added an annuity of £500, which was farther increased at the birth of the grandson, our Dick, by a like provision for the child from my father, together with a gift of the Croft at Wynhold.

“When Richard Shustoke lay dying, in the house that is now Jekyll’s, and my father (his first and dearest comrade in England) watched by his bed, he begged Ralph to fetch from the little cabinet—the same that you have seen there—a certain package of letters. A long while he held these, turning them over fondly, and murmuring tender, tearful words. Then he handed them to my father, saying ‘Burn these now, Ralph ! Let me see you burn them.’

“Those were his mother’s letters ; and Richard Jekyll has never heard of her, nor of her home at Garrison Forest, nor of the Devil Dick who was lost in the *Favorite*.”

That night, Grayhurst and Jekyll sat in the porch at The Chequers, and smoked in silent rumination, overcome by the glamour of the hour and the scene ; for all the landscape was bathed in the silver flood of a full moon, and no sound broke the stillness, save the distant tinkle of a sheep-bell and the rustle of the leaves.

Presently Jekyll shook himself.

"Wake up, Grayhurst!" he cried, "and give us an American song: not clod-hopper's trash, like Yankee-Doodle: nor hyfalutin', like Hail Columbia; nor the spiteful minstrelsy of the Star-Spangled Banner, so painful to British sensibilities; but a true backwoods ballad, if the squatter muse has ever produced so original a stave."

"Here goes then," said the American: "a thing I caught from a boatman on the Sacramento River. He said he learned it when he was logging in Oregon."

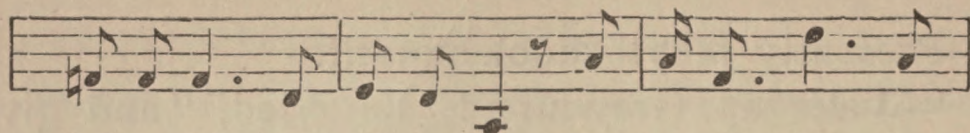
"What's logging?"

"Making ballads with an axe."

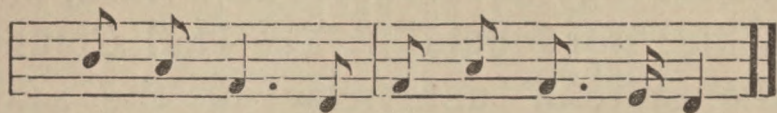
"That's better than making sermons with 'old saws,' as Winifred says of the Vicar's preaching. Well, how did it go, among the logs? No piano arrangement, please."

"So, then:

A cab - in in the tim - ber stands, In
that new counterie; A lodge I build - ed with my hands, In
that new coun-ter-ie. I go to mar - ket with a gun; I



rath-er fish for food than fun ; And fid - dle when the



day is done, In that new coun - ter - ie.

“ A ready rope is all our law,
 In that new coun-terie ;
 No bailiff's grip, no taxman's maw,
 In that new coun-terie.
 We keep our money in a mine ;
 On johnny-cake our ladies dine ;
 And all the girls are superfine,
 In that new coun-terie.”

“ And all the girls are superfine,
 In that new coun-terie ! ”

sang Jekyll. “ Grayhurst, were you ever home-sick for a place you never saw ? ”

“ Oh, yes ! After reading Melville's *Typee* I was home-sick and heart-sick, for many a day, for the Marquesas Islands ; and once, off the coast of Patagonia, Cape Saint-John, grizzled and gaunt, and clamorous with penguins and gulls, bewitched me with a longing so uncanny that I could have thrown myself into the sea.”

“ Grayhurst, let's go *home*—to that new coun-terie. Swear that you'll take me when you go, or I'll run away and become a philo-progenitive and rapacious Mormon, and flaunt the motto of your native State, ‘ *Crescite et multiplicamini.* ’—Good-

night!" And he ran off abruptly, singing as he took the road to Wynhold,

"On johnny-cake our ladies dine,
And all the girls are superfine,
In that new coun-terie."

"That's odd!" thought the American. "He has left his mare Minx in the stable; and he is in no humor for my company on the road—that's odd!"

He leaned on the rail of the porch and watched his friend, no longer singing or loitering, but with free swinging stride making for the bridge.

"Mr. Grayhurst!"

He started, and turned. Dolly stood in the door, and beckoned mysteriously. As he approached she retreated toward the inner staircase, still inviting him to follow as she ascended, and so drew him into his own room.

"Well, Dolly," said he, "what is all this? Love or madness?"

"That's just what I want to know, sir. Stand at this window, please, and look up the road. There's a man, just passing the bridge, going toward Overstoke lodge."

"Mr. Jekyll, of course; he has just left me."

"I know, sir. And you see he keeps the right side of the road, where the moonlight is brightest, and there's a path in the grass. On the other side there's the shadow of the Hurst; and the

tall hedge beyond carries the shadow on, you see, sir, till you come to that break in the bush where the moonlight bursts through—so full and clear that we can almost trace the sheep-tracks from here. Now, Mr. Grayhurst, sir, just watch that stream of moonlight on the hedge side, after Mr. Jekyll has passed it in the road. In three minutes he'll be there."

Grayhurst waited; there was humor in the situation, and Dolly was a clever girl; his hand rested on the plump shoulder, and the plump shoulder was alert and expectant. Dolly's mental chronometer was true; in three minutes Dick was passing the luminous space.

"Now, sir! never mind Mr. Jekyll. Watch the break in the hedge."

Grayhurst waited and watched; the plump shoulder quivered and twitched; and Dolly, panting with parted lips, was pretty in the moonlight.

"Dolly!" said Grayhurst, "this suspense is maddening; one minute more, and I shall kiss you!"

"*No such luck!* I mean, thank you, sir.—There! there! Look now, Mr. Grayhurst, sir!"

A swarthy fellow, gripping a bludgeon, emerged from the screen of the hedge, plunged skulking through the stream of light, that showed the very buttons at the knees of his corduroy smalls, and disappeared behind the shrubbery beyond.

"Abershaw! What is he up to?"

“Ah! that’s what I’m just wicked to know, sir. And if I was a man, with a handy revolver in my table-drawer, I’d know before I went to bed.”

“Dolly, can you hold your tongue?”

“If ever! and me a bar-maid? Paid for talking all day about nothing, and holding my tongue about everything else.”

“Well, this affair is something else. So hold your tongue; and here’s the kiss you begged for.”

“Oh! oh! Did ever?”

“Now leave my candle on the table in the side hall; and go to bed, like a Vestal Virgin.”

He took his hat, and started for the stairs, buttoning his coat; then turning suddenly, caught the girl’s hand and led her back into the room.

“What do you know, Dolly? Or what do you imagine? Speak quickly, and speak low.”

“There’s danger in that gipsy fellow, sir. Whether he’s mad, or whether he’s bad, there’s danger in him. He’s wild after Phyllis, and she’s afraid of him.”

“How do you know that?”

“She’s always swearing he’s a lamb; besides, she sleeps with me sometimes.”

“Oh!—Is it for herself that she fears him?”

“Not she. He’d cut a score of throats for her, and finish with his own.”

“What is it then?”

“The temper of the limmer. He’s got it in

his gipsy heart that there's something between the innocent lass and, and—Mr. Jekyll, sir."

"What?"

"The crazy scorpion! Why, the gentleman never so much as passes a joke with her. You see, sir, *her hair's too red*. But mark this, Mr. Grayhurst: when Phyllis is at the inn, Kit never shows himself here; but if Mr. Jekyll passes the evening with you, and takes the road for Wynhold late, as he did to-night, Abershaw is never far off. I caught him hanging about the stables to-night, but I did not let him catch me."

Grayhurst ran down stairs, but the girl overtook him in the porch.

"Mr. Grayhurst, sir! you forgot something."

It was a pistol.

The highway, as it approached the avenue at Overstoke, made a slight deflection, bearing gently to the right, and then more abruptly curving to the left again, as it rounded the covert of shrubbery that screened the lodge; so that, from the gate, the nearer stretch of road on the Yawdley side was quite concealed. Thus Grayhurst, keeping to the mossy turf, betrayed his approach neither to the eye nor to the ear of a man who crouched in the shadow of the copse—a man blind to all objects, save such as the depths of the avenue might disclose; deaf to all sounds, save a whisper that might be muffled there.

"Thieves, Abershaw?"

Grayhurst had marked how the fellow clutched his bludgeon with a wicked grip, and breathed hard between inarticulate mutterings, as, stooping low, he peered into the shadows.

Now, at that sudden challenge from an ambush, he turned and sprang with ready weapon, alert and expert. The American had not advanced into the shadow of the copse, and the moonlight at his back revealed to the impetuous bailiff a man with a pistol.

Grayhurst at that moment recalled Jekyll's description of Kit, "a slow fellow who is always on hand."

"Thieves, Abershaw?"

The bludgeon now lay in the grass, and the man stood, hat in hand, as meek as his bludgeon.

"Mr. Grayhurst! my humble service t' ye, sir. 'Twere a bit o' a start like, arskin' your pardon—bein' lonesome, d'ye see, sir, and layin' for tramps."

"Tramps. Could you make them out?"

"Nowt to see, sir; but a shufflin' in the hedge, and then a whistle in the avenoo. I were in bed, sir, and they've got a smartish start o' me."

"Ah well! you are not to blame for that. An honest, hard-working fellow like you has a right to sleep soundly."

"Ay, sir; and 'tis a gentleman like you that takes the rights o't. That sound I do sleep, I

were just muddled like; else I'd 'a' knowed you quicker, Mr. Grayhurst, sir."

"Well, as I am out for a walk, I'll try the avenue for your tramps, and the grounds as far as the stables. If they double on me on either side, you can be ready for them. Stay here, and watch the cross path and the mere, from the hedge."

"If I might make so bold, sir, seein' as I know their tricks, bein' born to 'em like—if your honor would just let me,—Mr. Grayhurst, sir!——Damn him!"

The American had left him chafing there; and now advanced in the direction of the house, rapidly but cautiously, keeping well in the covert of the trees, and making no sound. At a point where the straight line of vista was lost, and the leafy alley swerved slightly to the left, he stopped, and retreated into the deepest shadow.

Voices! now raised on an earnest eager word, now falling low and for a moment lost, as the breeze rises and falls; the sound of his own name—Grayhurst!—nothing more; a movement bringing two forms into spectral view, as the moonlight, flashing through a lattice of leaves, flecks and bars the white drapery of a nymph, and lingers on Hyperion's face under a squire's riding hat; a bewildering blending of arms, a lingering ecstasy of lips—"Hul-lo!"—and Grayhurst whistled low, and then sang loud:

“A cabin in the timber stands,
In that new coun-terie,
A lodge I builded with my hands,
In that new coun-terie.

“Vanished! What a clever girl for moonlight emergencies! She is harboring in the thicket now—waiting for a friendly cloud, no doubt. But that amiable gipsy is a fool; and so is the Reverend Ethelred Thorpe. I must sing my song for Barbara, when she has time to hear the rest of it.”

CHAPTER XVI.

GLAMOURIE.—DRAWING THE LINE.

SINCE the sentimental episode of the avenue Grayhurst had not met Barbara alone, either at Overstoke or in the roads ; and he looked forward to a convenient interview with her, with an interest to which his supposed discovery imparted a purely intellectual quality. Would she betray embarrassment ? Improbable—her self-possession was one of her powers. Or curiosity ? Doubtful—her finesse was another. Now that he knew her story from Winifred, he justly estimated her resources of reticence and stratagem, acquired in the infant-school of self-defense ; and yet she had her caprices, that might be enticed ; and her surprises, that one might set traps for. Winifred had explained that there were two Barbaras ; to pit one against the other, in cunning fence, might even be virtue at the present juncture.

And here comes the lady ! galloping from Yawdley ; and there comes the American, trotting from Ausibel : both taking the early morning air, to meet unawares at the lodge.

Good-morrow to your night-cap!" cried Barbara merrily.

Painful embarrassment! thought Grayhurst, recalling his own sagacious speculations, as he responded—

‘Sweet air, blow soft! Mount, lark, aloft!
To give my love good-morrow.’

But I’m not your love.”

“Poet’s license. To give the Reverend Caryl Ethelred Thorpe’s love good-morrow: How would the breezes and the birds of the air take that?”

The girl greeted his sally with whole-hearted laughter.

“What’s the matter?” she asked; as Grayhurst regarded her thoughtfully.

“Oh! early birds, you know. I was wondering if you had found your worm; I’ve got mine.”

“What is it?”

“The surprise and pleasure of meeting you.”

“Nice worm!—same as mine. Ride to the house with me, and you shall have johnny-cake for breakfast.”

“What do you know about johnny-cake?”

“Everything: I can make it; I can bake it; I can sing it:

“On johnny-cake your ladies dine,
And all the girls are superfine,
In that new coun-terie.”

"How did you come by your science and your song?"

"The song from Dick—but of course he does not know it; and the receipt from an old cook-book at Overstoke. Take of Indian meal two quarts; sweet milk one pint—"

"Wha-at?"

"Sweet milk one pint; beat the yolk of four eggs;—"

"What for?"

"To mix with the meal, of course; or with the milk, or something. Oh, you know!"

"Miss Lynn, this is simply wicked. That a work professing to impart instruction on a subject so serious as johnny-cake, should inculcate principles so false and a practice so vicious, suggests possibilities of perversion too deplorable to contemplate, and shocks the imagination with the spectacle of the simple British mind misled, betrayed, without faith, without hope."

"Oh, I'm so sorry! Is it the milk?"

"What is milk to us, when all is error and confusion? In the first place, the milk should *not* be sweet; and then there should be no milk at all. Likewise as to the eggs: use no eggs, and never beat them—never!"

"Dear sir, how shall I thank you? You have saved my domestic reputation, besides a quantity of milk and eggs. Now I have only to set my cake in the oven, and——"

"Stop! what madness is this? Is it johnny-cake, or Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that we are discussing?"

"Is it to be eaten raw?"

"Toasted, dear lady, always toasted. First the crude material, thick and slab, is to be laid upon some flat surface (the back of your looking-glass will do, or an ancestral breastplate of the Roundhead period—there's a handy one in the gallery), and tenderly patted with judicious fingers, until it assumes the required degree of stratification."

"I see; 'Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker's man'!"

"Quite so; it was the johnny-cake that inspired that time-honored poem."

"Pat it, and pat it, and mark it with G; and put it in the oven—"

"Excuse me: lean it against a smoothing-iron or a brick, in front of a roaring fire—"

"And mark it with J. G. and W. B.?"

"No! Toss it to the pigs—who, if they were pigs of Maryland breed, would scorn it; for they would know that no slender English maiden, free-born and fair, could ever produce that subtle-savory thing we term a johnny-cake. It is the fittest survival of a sensuousness essentially Ethiopian, and was evolved from the inner consciousness of a true child of Ham—some hereditary bondsmen. To make a faultless johnny-cake, Miss Lynn, you must be black, you must be fat, you must be

a pampered slave and a doting despot ; and even so, your secret shall be buried with you ; you can never teach the world how to make a johnny-cake, because you never learned ; you were born so—What's the matter ? ”

Barbara's horse had shied with a bound, and for the moment she was busy, head and hands, with the startled creature.

“Soh, there ! Pansy. 'Tis only Abershaw.”

“Abershaw ! I do not see him.”

“Nor I,” said Barbara. “Nevertheless, he is here. Look in the thicket.”

Grayhurst rode back a few rods, to the spot where Pansy had shied ; and in the bush, outside the line of trees, he discovered the bailiff. In a nook quite bare of herbage, and so shaded at all times that the earth was still wet and soft from a passing shower that had left no mark in the open ground, the man was searching in the plastic soil ; and so intently engaged was he, that even for the tramp of the horses and the talk of the riders he seemed not to have paused in his task. Grayhurst by a gesture signalled to the lady to be still, and watched the fellow, as stooping low, his left hand on his knee, he slowly turned from side to side, and with expressive fingers traced—foot-prints !

For some minutes the American sat motionless in his saddle, marking the movements of the man, and striving to interpret the parable and the signs ;

for it was at this spot that he had heard the voices and discovered Jekyll, on the night of his encounter with Abershaw at the lodge; and here now was Barbara, imperturbable as the Sphinx.

Then quietly he rejoined his companion, and they rode forward, slowly and in silence.

"You are a model horsewoman, Miss Lynn. Why are you so seldom in the saddle?"

"I have no 'proper' escort, except the ordinary parish priest."

"Hail, Columbia, happy land! where every thing is proper that is not common. But are you not unduly fastidious and exacting? The average American *equestrienne* would esteem herself happy in the attendance of a tame Anglican vicar."

"And with rapture would I exchange with her, for the fine distraction of a Texan Ranger."

"Or the tempestuous wantonness of a Californian mule-driver? But why cross the seas for your disheveled ideal, when you have a Devil Dick at your elbow? By the by, those two—I mean Dick and the Vicar—appear to regard each other with a certain reserve, I fancy; a diplomatist might say that their 'relations' were 'strained'—might he not?"

"Possibly; unless your diplomatist should chance to be that phenomenon in his craft, a plain man talking plain English; in which case he would say that Thorpe hated Jekyll, and Jekyll despised Thorpe."

"You put the case strongly."

"Not more so than Caryl himself would put it; he is not stupid; he does not deceive himself. You avoid him; Winifred pities him; the Squire tolerates him; I do most heartily detest him;"—

"Miss Lynn!"

"Jekyll despises him; and—"

"You will marry him?"

The girl turned upon Grayhurst with flashing eyes; her lips were parted as if for some impetuous utterance, but only a broken incoherent ejaculation escaped her. Then she stung her mare smartly with the whip, and as the pretty creature sprang snorting, Barbara curbed her so fiercely that she reared upright, and pawed the air.

In a moment the American was ready, with arm extended, to snatch the reckless rider from the saddle before the mare should fall backward.

"Soh, Pansy! Poor Pansy!" and the girl patted the trembling neck, and cooed in soothing sounds.

"Is she not a beauty, Mr. Grayhurst?"

He did not reply, and his look was stern.

"You are displeased; you are angry," she said, touching his arm timidly, and with contrition in her eyes.

"Miss Lynn, if I am ever to have the pleasure of riding with you again, I trust you will address your energetic expressions of emotion to me; the other animal does not understand them, you see."

She hung her head in silence, and Grayhurst, regarding her askance, saw her transformed, subdued and gentle; with a touching impulse she turned, and with tearful eyes offered him her hand.

"I thank you," she said, "for reproving me; no one else is so friendly, no one else is so true: except our Winifred; and it is hard for her, for she knows that a woman's rebuke to a woman is as a drawn sword."

He had detained her hand kindly; now, in releasing it, he said,

"You are happy in the love of Miss Blythe, Barbara."

"Barbara!"

"Pardon me, Miss Lynn; your friendliness beguiled me, and I forgot myself."

"Then always forget yourself, I beg; and remember, rather, that whatever of good you may find in me is Barbara, and the rest is Miss Lynn. I am indeed happy in the love of Winifred, and I would rejoice to share that happiness with you—although it is all I have."

"Or desire? for if I am to understand that Miss Lynn is to marry a man whom she does most heartily detest, I should like to know what is to become of Barbara."

"Oh, we must kill her off, in a nice, heart-rending chapter."

"But as Barbara is the more interesting and

loveable of the two, suppose we save her by frustrating the fatal nuptials. The other characters—Miss Blythe, Jekyll, and Grayhurst—may conspire to accomplish that end without seriously impairing the plot; and Devil Dick may be the disheveled angel who thwarts the schemes of the reverend villain."

The girl laughed, "And Devil Dick," she said, "would fill the part with ingenious malice. The congenial sport would inspire him, without the incentive of nobler motives. Did Winifred ever tell you the Ezekiel story?"

"Never. Who is Ezekiel?"

"He's dead. He was a prophet, with radical views on the subject of shepherds who 'feed themselves.' Oh! Jekyll quite approves of Ezekiel."

"I should not have supposed him familiar with the voice of the prophets, nor concerned for the radical views of the son of Buzi."

"It was all owing to Winifred. Ah! wait till she takes you captive, and leads you by the rivers of Babylon. About Ezekiel? Well, it seems that Winifred had been having serious talk with Jekyll one day, having found him somewhat muddled in his Catechism, and incoherent in his Creed; and she was led, by the contemplation of his spiritual imbecility, to speak of the stricter functions of the clergy, and the responsibility of teachers in the Church. She portrayed for him a preacher, such as Paul, 'who hath the Bible at his

fingers' ends ; ' and having won him to the cause of the faithful shepherd, suddenly plunged him into the thirty-fourth of Ezekiel, and baptized him in a noble indignation against the rapacious shepherds who 'feed themselves.'

"Jekyll was delighted with the Prophet, whom he seemed to regard as a sort of sublimated Archbishop of Canterbury ; and he urged me earnestly to 'try Thorpe with the thirty-fourth of Ezekiel.'

"You know it is an Overstoke custom, derived from Squire Marmaduke's time, to call the household together in the morning-room on Sunday nights, to hear the Bible read. The chapter is selected by the Squire, but not always read by him ; sometimes he assigns that duty to me, sometimes to Jekyll, if he has passed the evening with us ; invariably to the Vicar, when he is present.

"One Sunday, we had them both to tea ; and they lingered until the stable clock struck ten.

"That was the signal for the servants, who came to their appointed places, led by Mrs. Pennyweight and Keyes. When all were seated, and the solemnity was such as only the presence of the British butler can impart, I brought the small Bible to the Squire, and took a seat beside him, while Jekyll sat between me and the Vicar. When the Squire had selected his chapter, he handed me the open book, and Jekyll received it from me on its way to the Vicar. But Jekyll was awkward ;

the book closed in his hands, and he lost the place.

"The Squire, who gives all his mind devoutly to these occasions, had already settled himself in his chair, and closed his eyes.

"'Beg pardon, Thorpe!' said Dick. 'Very stupid of me; but I have the place. Ezekiel, I think, sir' (to the Squire).

"'Eh? what? Dear me! I quite forget. Ezekiel, was it, or Isaiah? Ezekiel, you say. Why not? Ezekiel is good.'

"'Ezekiel, thirty-fourth,' said Dick, as he passed the book to the Vicar.

"Caryl is an accomplished reader: correct, graceful, impressive. Dick, who had long wished to hear him read the thirty-fourth of Ezekiel, now assumed an attitude of eager interest and admiration.

"Caryl, who had not stoned the prophets for some time, and so did not recognize this one, started with brave confidence. I know by heart that sublime indictment and imprecation, Mr. Grayhurst; and it is strange that no thought of the humor of the situation, then, intrudes upon my remembrance of the words, to belittle or profane their awful import. Even the malicious device of Jekyll seems to derive a certain dignity of motive and meaning from the scorn and fury of their divine compassion:

"'Woe to the shepherds of Israel that do feed

themselves ! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks ?

“ ‘ Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool ; ye kill them that are fed—but ye feed not the flock.

“ ‘ The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost ; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.

“ ‘ And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd ; and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered.

“ ‘ Therefore, O ye shepherds ! hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God : Behold, I am against the shepherds ; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock ; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more, for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.’

“ The Squire had opened his eyes at the first words, and now sat bolt upright, staring at the Vicar. For the first time since we were children and played together, I saw Jekyll frightened. For the first time, I pitied the Vicar of Overstoke. But the Vicar read on, slowly, painfully—for the Prophet had him by the throat.”

Grayhurst found himself regarding this many-mooded girl with impatient interest: a true Cynthia of the minute, illogical, intangible, who in so brief an interview had presented for his contemplation the caprices of a Protean character—from a passion of rebellious bitterness to sweet surrenders of docility and contrition, from austere reserves and ironies to indiscreet impulses of frankness, from cheerful comedy to sombre despondency, from frivolities to pious fervors.

“Barbara,” he said, “when your horse shied near the thicket, you said I would find Abershaw there. How did you know that?”

“By his private signal.”

“You are mysterious.”

“But the signal is plain enough. Whenever I approach that man, whenever he approaches me, at any time, in any place, however he may be concealed, however I may be employed, in whatever company, in whatever mood, without a thought for his existence, or an interest in it, his presence is revealed to me by a sudden pain, sharp, penetrating—*here*, always just *here*.”

“In the right side, below the shoulder,” said Grayhurst. “I see. And how long does it last?”

“Perhaps a minute, rarely longer.”

“And how does it affect you?”

“At first it alarmed me, and I cried out. That was before I had discovered its connection with

the bailiff. It still alarms me when it takes me unawares, but I no longer cry out."

"Why not?"

"Because it has become a *personal* thing; it concerns me only; I would keep it to myself—you understand?"

"I understand; and that is the worst of it."

"How?"

"It shows that you believe in it."

The girl smiled, thoughtfully, even sadly.

"How long since your first experience of this—what shall I term it?—symptom?"

"Symptom will do. Almost a year."

"And how often have you felt it when no Abershaw was near?—frankly now, and honestly, in the interest of exact scientific inquiry."

"Never once; of course that is the key to the case. Besides, delusions are not so dear to me; I have old scores to settle with some delusions of mine, and I am armed against them. If my Kit had failed me only once or twice, I should have taken my 'symptom' to my doctor, and he would have applied hallucination to the seat of pain, and administered idiosyncrasy internally."

"You have been keeping this to yourself, you say; then why have you revealed it to me?"

"Because I fancy it has a certain scientific interest, as you have suggested; and it occurred to me that, in that light, it might be important to provide an intelligent witness to the phenomena;

and then, I knew you would not laugh at me. By the by, when you have no nobler study to engage your mind, I recommend Abershaw as an object of interest; he worships my maid, and cringes to Jekyll—though I fail to see the connection.”

“And you have not mentioned this matter to Dick?”

“Not I. He would first laugh at me, and then assault the bailiff, for presuming to be mysteriously responsible for a twinge in a lady’s shoulder. Dick has peculiar views concerning bailiffs, women, and vicars.”

Grayhurst, who had now more food for thought than appetite for breakfast, took his leave of Barbara at the end of the avenue, and returned toward the lodge; while she rode on to the house, where she was received by the Vicar, who had come over to confer with the Squire.

“You have had a pleasant ride, no doubt—in agreeable company.”

“Delightful, both.”

“Once for all, there must be an end of this.”

“The rides, or the company?”

“Oh, do not waste your wits in flippant bravado. I draw the line at that beastly Yankee.”

“Come here, Caryl! Stand here. From this point, you observe, we command an inspiring view of the noble domain of Overstoke. If you follow my finger, we can trace the limits of the land, from Yawdley, beyond Wynhold, to Ausibel.

You have taken pains to discover that, at the death of the Squire, the estate is to be partitioned between Richard Jekyll and Barbara Lynn."

"What stuff is this?"

Barbara laughed: "How cross you are! Don't you see that so long as I can draw that line, you can be in no position to draw yours. Come to breakfast."

CHAPTER XVII.

“ALL’S RIGHT WITH THE WORLD !”

AN afternoon in midsummer, and all the land was gasping. “Buz! quoth the blue-fly, Hum! quoth the bee.” Leigh Hunt has described such a day, in words that pant for leafy lanes, and long to nap with “the swinkt mower” in the shadow of the sheaves.

Grayhurst sat at his chamber window, and nodded to the drowsy verse of Keats, “singing of summer in full-throated ease :”

“The poetry of earth is never dead :
When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead.
That is the grasshopper’s ; he takes the lead
In summer luxury—he has never done
With his delights ; for when tired out with fun,
He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.”

As the American tossed back his hair, and bared his throat to take the grateful breeze that came through the Hurst and over the burn from Brignal, the freshness and the fragrance it brought to his senses and his soul were as emanations from *her* presence, and waftures of her charm.

With a sudden, eager impulse he arose; and with the impatience of one who begrudges precious moments, gave some necessary touches to his hair and his attire, flung on his hat, and went out—down the slope, across the bridge, into the footpath by the burn, through the Hurst—quick, resolved, insistant; no listless loitering now, no whistling as he went for want of thought, no lingering to trifle with a fern-plume or a flower; and so straight to the little wicket.

There he paused, and questioned the garden and the porch. There was her low, deep chair, in the shadow of the vine; there was her pretty basket, and the book on the wicker table; there was Mutzie, sleeping on her stool; there, on the arm of the chair, hung a bright little frock she had been making for a child—he smiled and murmured when he saw it; there, on the steps, a lady's handkerchief had fallen: had she dropped it, going in or coming out? Was she in the house or in the garden?

The answer came from the burn; somewhere over there she was singing. He skirted the garden and traversed the orchard, led by the sound—from tree to tree advancing warily, making no noise; he had never seen Winifred *by herself*.

Beyond the orchard, where the greensward sloped to the stream, the truant brook, "prattling its primrose fancies," lingered at a hazel bower and "bubbled into an eddy bay" for her; and

here, where the leafy screen made a lady's chamber of a grassy plot, she sat and paddled bare-foot in the burn—and sang :

Andantino.

O - ver the mountains, And un - der the
waves ; O - ver the fountains, And un - der the
graves ; Un - der floods that are deep - est, Which
Nep - tune o - bey ; O - ver rocks that are
steep - est, Love will find out the way.

“Where there is no place
For the glow-worm to lie ;
Where there is no space
For receipt of a fly ;
Where the midge dare not venture,
Lest herself fast she lay ;
If Love come he will enter,
And soon find out the way.”

And Grayhurst, captured there between a rapture and a fear, found out his way.

"Is that a toe I see, or a water-lily? Ah! now to be a newt or a minnow!" he cried.

As Winifred sang, unconscious of her own prophecy, she had reclined on the turfy cushion, one hand pillowing her cheek, the other guarding the sweet disorder of the petticoat that hung above the water; and so she lay, and watched the finny life of the burn,

"With here and there a lusty trout,
And here and there a grayling."

She had loosed her indulgent kerchief, and freed to the happy breeze the soft and dimpled bounty of her shoulders. Ah! but she was surpassing sweet and fair; the classic bust of Clytie, incomparable, delectable and chaste, here pulsed and flushed in a gentle rural maid.

But with the first call of Grayhurst's adventurous challenge, she started erect, and snatched the kerchief that lay in the grass; then shrank, and averted her face, blushing in cheek and neck and shoulder, yet smiling: like Sir Philip Sydney's Philoclea, when "making shamefacedness pleasant, and pleasure shamefaced, she tenderly moved her feet, unwonted to feel the naked ground, until the touch of the cold water made a pretty kind of shrugging come over her body—like the twinkling of the fairest among the fixed stars."

“Do not fear to put thy feet
Naked in the river, Sweet !
Think not leech, or newt, or toad,
Will bite thy foot when thou hast trod ;
Nor let the water, rising high
As thou wad’st in, make thee cry
And sob ; but ever live with me,
And not a wave shall trouble thee.”

“Ever live with me ! ever live with me !” he cried, springing forward impetuously, and dropping in the grass at her side. “There ! it is done, in four words. Winifred, you drew me, and I had to come. How could I think to find you here ? Now, you should be offended ; now, I should ask your pardon ; then we should be kindly reconciled—and then laugh in each other’s face, for the poor humbug of it all. I came with a heart full of words ; and I can find only four. I came with great news ; and it is old already. I came to ask a great question, and I dare not face the answer. There’s the prayer !”—and he held out a hand, trembling and cold. “If you have the blessing for me—*put it there !* Or else let me go, go, go ! while any manhood is left me.”

She waited—“he has more to say”—not he.

He waited—“has she nothing to say ?—Winifred !”

Then she laid her soft little hand in his, and the man was shaken with the tender touch. And both were transfigured by the rapture and the

magic of a great discovery: he had become as a little child, and she was as a yearning mother, pondering all these things in her heart;—until their lips met, and then the woman did taste of the knowledge of good and evil, and immediately her eyes were opened, and she knew that her ankles were bare.

When her lover had gone—only to wait for her in the arbor or the porch—Lady Goodluck remained for a time musing, wondering if ever, since the first lover was invented, aught so wonderful had happened to a maiden paddling barefoot in a burn; and did that lover kiss *her*—so? And did that maiden feel so—SO? And what did she do then? And *which toe* was it? seeing that that toe could never be the same to her that it had been before.

And "John?"—not a romantic name perhaps, but such a useful, durable name, for a family man; such a friendly name too: how could one ever quarrel with "John?" But an odd name, now that she thinks of it! How do people pronounce it, "in society?" *Jon* perhaps, mincingly. "Lord Jon Russell;" but behind the door, and in his arms?—*Jawn*, with a mouthful.

Then she glanced, sidelong, at her shoulders: "Oh! oh!"—that dreadful kerchief was lying in the grass, rods and rods away, where the poor thing had followed him, clinging to his sleeve;

and he must have thought—pshaw! who *thinks*? Then, in a moment, her dripping feet were in her slippers; and she ran to the house, taking the back way, by the bee-hives. Christie Breme was in the laundry, regarding her storm-tossed features in a bit of looking-glass, and murmuring “the Lord’s will be done!” when a vision of disheveled loveliness took her unawares; her freckled cheek was caught and fondled in a balmy bosom, and she was left gasping, with a prayer on her lips and soap-suds in her eye.

In Winifred’s chamber, Judith moved from place to place, engaged in little ministries of love: indulging her foolish, feeble hands in touches of careful tenderness, small tasks of habit rather than of need, such as they had learned from long years of happy service, mixed with fond triumphs, tears and prayers. Again and again she patted and stroked the precious counterpane, endeared to her by a nurse’s memories and dreams, consecrated by a foster-mother’s yearnings and benedictions; again and again, with patient persuasion, she coaxed the fold of a curtain to droop as she had taught it; again and again she undid this thing or that, that those poor fumbling fingers might have the fond delusion of doing it over again; again and again she stooped, to pick up the pin that was no longer there, or the stray thread that never had been; and as she moved from place to place, led by love in dotage, she

lingered over a keepsake or a token, and her lips moved mutely—communing with by-gones.

"Judy, dear!"

She turned slowly, for the hinges of age are stiff; and there was Expectation, panting with parted lips; and Wonder, big-eyed and perplexed; and Revelation, with her heart in her mouth.

"My bonnie! and where ha' ye been so long?"

"At the hazels, with my feet in the burn and my head in the sky."

"Then ye mun ha' seed him."

"Who's *him*?"

"Sure, there's nobbut the one."

"Only one man! Why the world's full of them; a woman can't show a toe but a man jumps—they swarm so."

"That did use to be so, hinnie; now there's nobbut the one. Happen ye did see him when yer yed were i' the sky. He's not long from there."

"Judith Welcome, I hate nonsense."

"Then ye'll niver bide the man, for he's full o't. There he is in the porch, restin' like. Will't please ye to come in, sir? says I; she'll be no long gone.—Is it Miss Blythe? says he.—Is the man wanderin'? thinks I.—No, thankee, says he; I'm quite comfortable here. You see I'm just back from heaven, madam (*madam!* he says), and I feel tired. With that I was troubled, and I stood watchin' him, wishin' for you. Then up he jumps, and clips me in his arms, and *kisses* me, he

does—and me a totterin' crone! and he calls me Aunt Judy, and asks me can I keep a secret. Then I looks into the eyes o' him, down into the heart o' him; and my heart did gi' a great jump and a thump; and Blessed be God! says I, that ha' brought it to pass; and blessed be my bonnie, that ha' gi'n me a Shustoke to be maister in the dear ow'd house!

“‘Shustoke!’ says he, droppin' into the chair.

“‘Ay! just a bonny Shustoke,’ says I. ‘Can I keep a secret, ye says, Maister Grayhurst. Ay, and catch one too, fine and clever as ye think yosel:—with yer Shustoke fingers talkin', *so*, when ye be talkin', like Squire Randal; and yer Shustoke ankle in yer hand (see there now!) across yer knee, and yer Shustoke yed throwd back, and yer Shustoke eyes blinkin' droll, when ye be list'nin', like Squire Ralph; an' yer Shustoke flash, like Devil Dick—’”

“Oh, Judy! stop, stop, STOP!”

“Ay! rest here, my bonnie, on the poor old heart; and cry, and cry, and cry, for the great gladness o't. If ye could laugh now, I'd be shamed for ye, I'd be feared for ye, and for him.”

“My beautiful old mammie!—And then?”

“And then he says, Aunt Judy, you're a witch, and I'll have you burned, like Joyce Curzon, says he. And all the time Mutzie she did lick his hand, and bark and scold to make him talk to her; for she were iver main fond o' him. Oh, but they do

know, they doggies! So up he takes her, and runs to the pantry, and does just gi' her the sugar-bowl, full! And O! but she did eat a pound, that sweet she is; and 'twill be a gracious dispensation if she dunna ha' fits this night."

And Grayhurst lingered there,

"Till every daisy slept, and Love's white star
Beamed thro' the thickened cedar in the dusk."

"And if Judith had not found you out, would you have told me, John?"

"Surely, to-night, before you slept."

"Shall *you* sleep to-night?"

"How beautiful you are, Winifred!"

"Yes—I must be—*now*.

"Why did you not tell us, John?"

"It was a freak at first: of pride, of independence, even of policy; to keep my simple quarters at the inn; to recommend myself to the Squire by what he might find to approve in *me*, without claim of kindred; to study my English kin-folk from a stranger's point of vantage; but later, of love—to win Winifred Blythe for plain John Grayhurst."

"But I have been loving you so long that I was growing fearful and ashamed; and these are the arms of plain John Grayhurst, and here is a kiss for plain John Grayhurst. Now, who are you, John?"

"I have told you of my people, dear, keeping

back only a name. My mother, whom I lost in my childhood, was Katharine Shustoke of Maryland. The stranger who came to Ausibel and to Overstoke, Squire Marmaduke's 'kinsman from abroad,' and Jekyll's grandfather, was 'Devil Dick' Shustoke of Garrison Forest, my grandfather's brother. Now you know how Jekyll comes by his name. And Jekyll's mother, Johanna, was so named by her father in memory, no doubt, of *his* grandmother, Johanna Carden, who married in Maryland Richard Shustoke, of Wynhold.

"In telling you my secret, my love, I am telling you, you see, the secret of Jekyll's birth, which at last you share with the Squire. Now you can imagine with what eager interest I first heard from your lips the story of Devil Dick; and how I was startled and bewitched by the sound of that name, when it greeted me on the box of the Ausibel coach that brought me to Yawdley.—Why do you sigh? Of what are you thinking, dear?"

"Of the coach that, some day, will take you from Yawdley."

"Without you, Winifred? The coach is not built, nor the wheelwright born; the wood is in the nut, and the iron in the mine, and the day is in my grave."

With a sweet devoutness she folded her palms: "The Lord be gracious to you, my love!" she said; "the Lord lead you, and keep you always."

And he kissed the pious hands, and departed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A NOCTURNE.

LATE in the night again; the lights of The Chequers had been extinguished, and all was still in the house; Toby Hindman, having speeded his parting guests (the schoolmaster and the apothecary, who, being bachelors and scientific, were debaters and late sitters), had scored another day in the monotonous diary of a country inn; and even Dolly Sparrow had ceased to wag and twitter, and had retired to her chaste perch.

Grayhurst, from his look-out, had been reading his own thoughts by the light of Winifred's lamp, as it pierced the sombre shadows of the Hurst; and he had followed it from her pretty cell over the porch to the western window of her chamber. Now it had bidden him good-night, and he was left to entertain a bustling company of conjectures and fancies, importunate and curious; for the air was charged with plot, and night unto night imparted secrets.

“How strange the distant bay
Of dogs! how wild the note
Of cocks that scream for day,
In homesteads far remote!

“How strange and wild to hear
The old and crumbling tower,
Amid the darkness, suddenly
Take life and speak the hour!”

“You and I,” Winifred had said, “must watch and guard Barbara.”

Then Winifred was troubled for the girl; but what was the complexion of her fears, and whence came they? Were they vague and general, engendered by anxious observation of Barbara's nature, warped by an ominous experience, and her mysterious caprices of mood? Or were they particular and definite, even a logical acceptance of the girl's dark horror of Abershaw?

Not that: for Barbara had assured him that she had confided in no one but him; he recalled her words, “a *personal* thing—I would keep it to myself;” and the significant portent of her explanation, that even in revealing it to him she only thought “to provide an intelligent witness to the phenomena.”

And Abershaw's jealousy of Jekyll? groundless surely, possibly insane, but so real as to alarm the cool, sagacious Dolly; so real as to extort an adroit hint from Barbara herself, “he worships my maid, and cringes to Jekyll, though I fail to see the connection:” which, being interpreted, is “Where are your eyes?”

And now Grayhurst recalled certain light words of Barbara's, on another occasion. They were

speaking, he and she, of the ineffable charm of Phyllis's rustic beauty—"the prettiest low-born lass that ever ran on the greensward;" and the American, while for his own part confessing that he must be blind or bloodless to be insensible to it, expressed his astonishment at Dick's stolid indifference to the girl's delectable looks and ways. "As to that," said Barbara, "I am not so sure. We women recognize a form of 'indifference' that is not far removed from worship; it is so elaborate and so expressive."

Thus, Dolly's disclosure, and her vigilance; Barbara's verbal artifice, with its veiled meaning; Kit's dramatic lurking and prowling, at the inn, at the lodge, in the avenue: these were the several ways by which the American's conjectures were led to the same conclusion, that Abershaw was jealous of Jekyll—of careless Dick, with his curt nod, and his "so, Phyllis!"

But how could the senseless passion of this gipsy fellow concern the lady? Even if it presaged peril to Jekyll, by what imaginable relation could it inspire her with that hysterical horror which she described as 'personal'?

True, there was the assignation in the avenue, the embrace, the kiss, the sudden flight when the American cunningly startled the lovers with his song; but was that surely Barbara? That question had never vexed his mind before; was the spell of Abershaw upon him now? Well, much

of indiscriminate adventure must be granted to the grandson of Devil Dick Shustoke; but it was hard to imagine Richard Jekyll, with his occasional flashes of fine arrogance, partaking of amorous dalliance from the same dish with a mongrel gipsy.

And then there were signs of secret understanding between Jekyll and Barbara, signs that Winifred had evidently noted; for when they would have disposed of the Vicar's night-rider with light tosses of concerted "chaff," she had recalled them to the subject with a certain grave persistence; and he had not forgotten her charge to him, "Find the man! and when you are sure of him, tell no one but me."

The ribbon that Mutzie found in the churchyard—how much had it revealed to Winifred? Has Cicely ever again gone ghosting by the lychgate? or does she too sit at her window belated, and guess conundrums by the light of the moon?—employment more proper to a bewitched Yankee, outwatching his lady's light.

Plot and counterplot and catastrophe, ghost and lover and villain, and maiden all forlorn! on the same tame sequestered stage where "the teeming hen doth lay her egg each day, the while the conduits of the kine run cream for wine."

"What's that?"

A clatter of galloping came from the bridge, breaking the stillness of the sweet country night

with rude *r sonance* ; and a rider, dashing through a flood of moonlight, lightly breasted the slope and plunged into the shadow of the noble trees that embowered the forefront of the inn. With a murmur of astonishment, Grayhurst sprang to a window that overlooked the porch and, screened by the curtain, marked well both man and horse, as they charged into the farther light and, briskly turning, took a lane that left the road some rods beyond *The Chequers*, to rejoin the *Sylcaster* pike at the end of the High-street.

For some moments the American hesitated, pondering perplexed ; then, with sudden plan and purpose, he equipped himself as for a walk, cautiously descended the servants' stair, let himself out by a side-door into the coach-yard and, making the circuit of the stables, struck into 'a foot-path that skirted the lower side of the *Hurst* and traversed the fields to the *Overstoke* out-houses—a time-worn path, that had been trodden by shepherds and milkmaids, making a short cut between the *Manor-House* and the inn.

As he advanced with rapid, resolute strides, he mentally explored the event that had excited him so. One circumstance especially, by its unexpectedness and its significance, had impelled him, with a most disturbing impression, in the direction he was now taking.

Barbara's pretty mare, *Pansy*, was a gift from *Jekyll*, and was "own sister" to his favorite *Minx*.

So remarkable was their resemblance, in points, action and color, that whenever by a rare chance they made their appearance together, even the grooms came out to see.

"If 'tweren't for the splash," they said, "'twould be just wonnerful." On Pansy's pretty neck, under her mane, was a "splash" of vivid white, that showed when she tossed her head in her pert conceited way, for she was consumed with vanity.

Now, as man and horse emerged from the shadow of The Chequers and sprang into the moonlight beyond, there was the pert toss, and the mane tumbled by the night breeze, displaying the bright white mark; and what the American saw from his loophole was Jekyll mounted on Barbara's mare.

The path ended at the stables, and Grayhurst made straight for Pansy's lodging; the door stood wide, and the mare was gone. An open window in the rear admitted the moonlight, and he could see that Barbara's side-saddle was in its place; but one of the Squire's saddles, which usually hung near it, was missing now.

He had exchanged a late good-night with Jekyll at the inn, and had seen him take the road for Wynhold, riding Minx. And now he remembered that Dick had pressed him heartily to ride with him, and pass the night at the Croft; but the lover, flattered by Winifred's light, bethought him of sweeter company for his fancy and his dreams,

and so made excuse. Had Jekyll returned on foot from Wynhold, seized by a freak of restlessness or sport, and revived this puerile exploit to tease his friends again? If so, he must re-appear presently, to restore Pansy to her place, and to "cover his tracks" at the stable; and Grayhurst would lie in wait for him, a concealed and amused spectator.

He had no weary time to wait. The sound of a trotting horse advancing, not by the avenue, but by the lower fields on the Yawdley side, warned him to get in hiding; and he had not more than time to retreat to a convenient cover, where unseen he might observe the approach of his erratic comrade, when the mare was at the door, and the rider, dismounting briskly, led Pansy to her box.

The front of the stable was in deep shadow, and all was still, except for slight sounds by which the American's trained ear easily followed the movements within.

Then Jekyll came out and, having made the door fast, stood for a moment as if listening. Grayhurst supposed he would depart, either by the avenue, or by the shorter field-path; but to his surprise the young man took the direction of the Manor-House and, hurriedly making the circuit of the offices, turned at the eastern wing—while the American followed curiously, skulking in the shade, and smiling as he thought of Abershaw, on

the night when Dolly revealed the bailiff in a corresponding adventure.

On this side of the house were the apartments of Barbara. Here was her dressing-room, once Squire Marmaduke's snugger; and here was that stationary ladder, which he had erected under his window to afford him convenient egress in the witching hours when, on astronomical pursuits intent, he would rove with the bat and the owl, and commune with the constellations.

That window was the barred and bolted approach to penetralia sacred to the privacy of a young English lady—to her closet, to her bed-chamber, to all that is most chaste, most consecrated in her personal life,—to the honor of Mildred Shustoke's orphan and Randal Shustoke's ward.

And now John Grayhurst saw her kinsman, and his own, run lightly up the steps, and pass in with easy access to a daring welcome. And the American gnashed his teeth and groaned.

CHAPTER XIX.

A MINISTER OF GRACE AND A GRACELESS MINISTER.

NOT with the alacrity of an eager lover, but with the heavier steps of a troubled and care-laden friend, Grayhurst took the way to Brignal, on the morning after his eventful vigil at the Overstoke stables and under the window of Barbara's chamber. With head depressed he crept, communing with his fears; never did the path appear so short to him, the ferns so weed-like and the burn so dull. *Could* he tell her? *Must* he mislead her? What malice of circumstance was this, that he must check with a tale of shame and sorrow the glory and the gladness of her kiss? To-day the little wicket yielded too lightly to his touch, the paces to the trellis were too few.

"Have you discovered the night-rider?" He must stop that question on her lips, with a lover's pleasant trick; he must beguile her with sweet important nothings; the fortune of incoherent talk, beginning in *You and Me* and ending in *Me*

and You, may befriend him. No time to be guarded now—for there she is.

“You are not well, John. I saw you coming—and you poked. What is it, dear?”

“A mere nothing, my darling; headache, you know, [whopping lie!] The night was hot [perverted truth!] and I could not sleep [perjury by inference!]”

“Poor John! where does it ache? Rest it here!”

O, partial distribution of bounties, and bosoms uncertain and coy! A better man, with an honest ache, would have been left to groan forlorn, propping his pains on his vulgar fist.

“But I miss the cool morning-gown, my Wini-fred. You are dressed for the road; were you going to the village?”

“You lazy John! I have been to the Croft while you were sleeping; no, tossing and growling, poor thing!”

“To the Croft!”

“Why not? How amazed you look! John, you are in love. Yes, to the Croft. Dick came for me in the dog-cart, before I was up. Old Nanny Cole—his house-keeper, you know,—had been ill all night; her favorite enemy, sciatica, was upon her, and she had filled the Croft with groans and pennyroyal. Dick was at his wits' end; and had scalded Nanny's legs, filled his own hair with mustard, and got hartshorn in his eye. At mid-

night, he kicked the dog, kissed Nanny, mounted Minx, and rode on a run to Ausibel for the doctor, leaving his man, Snaffle, with the leg."

"You mean Yawdley."

"No, Ausibel,—why Yawdley? Nanny will have none but the Ausibel man. He flatters her, you see : tells her she's an interesting case, and a Christian example, and that her legs are peculiar. Soon after day-break, Dick left the doctor at the Croft, and came with the dog-cart for your heart's delight—that's me—and the red flannel. You should have seen Minx ; she fairly staggered coming back to Brignal. Why, John, how strangely you stare, sitting there ! What is in your mind ?"

"The wonder of it, dear, and the revelation. Jekyll as a ministering angel ! and yet I remember to have heard such things of his namesake, Devil Dick Shustoke."

"Ah ! you do not know him, John. On such occasions he is very lovable and very droll. One moment he stamps and swears, as he spills the medicine or spoils the gruel ; the next he mixes tenderness with jokes, in such unexpected ways that the poor old Nannies laugh between their groans. When disease or disaster comes to a cottage, look out for Devil Dick, with his happy blunders and his thoughtful fun.

"I rubbed Nanny's leg, while he held her hand, and beguiled her with heartless nonsense ;

and I am sure that if she had been required to forego the one comfort or the other, she would have dismissed me without remorse. They all love him, my poor folk, and confide in him, and are at their ease with him."

"Except Phyllis Hindman," said Grayhurst.

"Ah! you have observed that? Yes, that is odd. I sometimes fancy he dislikes the girl."

"And yet Abershaw is jealous of Jekyll."

"How absurd! Now say that I am jealous of Phyllis."

"Witness Dolly Sparrow, my lady."

"That bouncing bar-maid!"

"Well, yes: Dolly's 'household motions' are somewhat light and free; but if you had ever seen her off duty, when she shuts one eye and *thinks*, you would have discovered under the bar-maid's 'virgin liberty' a shape 'to haunt, to startle and waylay;' and she has waylaid Abershaw, and startled me!"

"What *are* you coming to?"

"To Abershaw, by way of Dolly, who has discovered that the gentle gipsy lurks in the stables when Jekyll is late at the inn; and one night, when Dick had taken the road for Wynhold on foot, she showed me Abershaw skulking behind the hedgerows, and dogging his steps."

"Oh John! you can never believe that."

"How should I know, dear? Abershaw is in love; so am I. Either of us may believe any thing

of the other. Besides, there's Barbara. She says Dick's indifference to the peculiar attractions of her maid is 'elaborate, and expressive'—which is just what the bailiff might say, if he had a clever woman's way of putting things."

"Then you conclude that Barbara is suspicious of Phyllis, as to the girl's relations with Jekyll?"

"That, dear, is the distinctly feminine form of the proposition. Being masculine, I conclude that Barbara is suspicious of Jekyll, as to his relations with Phyllis. See how gender determines the direction by which we arrive at the same conclusion! Male and female created He them."

"Then join your thought to mine, my love, in the charity that doth not behave itself unseemly, nor thinketh any evil; for it would grieve me, dear, most of all, *just now*—to think that you could wrong the girl by even a playful quip."

"You speak gravely, Winifred, even strangely. To re-assure you I will go far, and say that I——"

"You shall say nothing of the kind, sir," stopping his mouth with her hand. "You men all fall in love with Phyllis; even Dick would leave off snubbing her long enough to fight for her. And no wonder; for she is the consummate flower of beauty, modesty and sweetness, in an English country maid. There may be a Phyllis once in a century or so; Ben Jonson's Charis was such another. You remember?"

“Have you seen but a bright lily grow,
Before rude hands have touched it?
Have you marked but the fall o’ the snow,
Before the soil hath smutched it?
Have you felt o’ the wool o’ the beaver,
Or swan’s down ever?
Or have smelt o’ the bud o’ the briar,
Or the nard in the fire?
Or have tasted the bag o’ the bee?
O so white! O so soft! O so sweet is she!”

“And for all that,” said Grayhurst, “Jekyll flouts her; and I have heard Thorpe scold her.”

“The Vicar? indeed! How did he find the occasion?”

“It was in the avenue one day. We met Phyllis coming from the inn; she had spoken with Abershaw at the lodge; and apropos of that or nothing, the Vicar took her to task, with professional ostentation. Jekyll promptly snubbed him and dismissed the girl, with the air of one who says ‘this is my affair’—which struck me as peculiar; and the girl seemed pleased.”

“How did that strike you, John?”

“Also as peculiar. Why should she be pleased? His tone was masterful, not gracious; and she is a timid thing.”

“I think I understand. But first tell me, dear, what do you make of the Vicar?”

“The Vicar interests me, Winifred. In spite of all that is false in his life, and offensive in his temper and his manners, he challenges my charity,

and compels my sympathy : perhaps because I am not to the manner born, and have yet to be reconciled to the argument of your peculiar institution of church 'livings'—which (as I understand it) makes it possible that a priest of the oracles of God *may* be a mere functionary ; which may bestow a sacred office, for flattery or policy, upon a presumptuous mercenary, and elevate to a spurious, ironical reverence an unedified mountebank, without the sense to be embarrassed or the conscience to be ashamed. I might go farther, without departing from the record of Overstoke church ; for there I find a certain vicar installed by favor, and shamefully 'suspended' a few years later, for gross debauchery.

"I regard this vicar of yours as the product of a deplorable system ; and at times I have fancied that his offenses of temper and manners may be the painful expression of his own bitter protest against his own existence, self-defeated, and mocked with self-contempt.

"With all my heart I pity Thorpe ; the temptations of a man in a position so false and desperate exceed those of your wanton, comfortable fellows ; and in fair play we may praise him, as a convict may be praised, for keeping his cell clean."

"That is nobly severe, John, and reverent, and generous. Some other time I will try to show you that it is not as just as you would wish it to be ; our 'peculiar institution' is not wholly responsi-

ble for the Thorpes of to-day, or for the Revd. Jasper Shustokes of an earlier period. But just now I am most concerned to think that the wretched man at the Manse is not even entitled to the convict's praise."

"Winifred!—What is this?"

"Sit closer, John; I must speak low—So! Now amuse yourself with *this*, and please do not interrupt me;" and she laid her plump little hand in his.

"Last night, when you said good-night so early——"

"Lovers' good-nights are always early, dear; the late ones are good-mornings."

Acquiescent caresses! more or less imbecile.

"Last night, when you left me in the path near the burn, and disappeared beyond the bridge, I lingered there for some moments, listening to your steps; and then started to return to the house. In the very heart of the Hurst, where the shadows are deepest, I was startled by a call, 'Lady Goodluck,—dear lady!—O, please!'

"The voice was familiar; and yet I did not recognize it at first, it was so broken, so fluttering. I was not alarmed; that 'Lady Goodluck' is the password of my poor cottagers; it stands for love always, and often for pain; I have heard it at all hours, and in all places hereabouts. Before I could respond with a word of encouragement, there was rustling and panting in the shrubbery,

and Phyllis stood in the path. She had been watching and waiting for me ; and, as I afterward gathered from her almost incoherent explanation, she had seen us leave the wicket, and had retired out of hearing into the cover of the trees—troubled, even in her greater trouble, lest she should have offended us already. John, this innkeeper's daughter is one of nature's ladies ; and the woman who can give her lessons in innate delicacy must be too fine to be a duchess.

“ Her agitation was most painful : as I held her in my arms, she was all shaken with sobs ; again and again she raised her head from my shoulder, and let it droop backward, in such a limp helpless way—sighing long and deep, while the poor heart heaved audibly. It was dreadful, that wild outburst of emotion in a creature usually so pent-up and so quiet, so still because so deep.

“ It was long before she could speak ; every word burst in a sob or a moan. I soothed her as best I could, and led her to the little bench under the great elm ; and as we sat there in the dark, I hushed her when she tried to speak, and kissed and fondled her to make her cry, to wash a channel for her wits, you see. And, oh, how she did cry, John ! it was just heavenly.

“ At last she was quiet, only sobbing softly, like a little child. Then it came into my mind to ask her a strange question, a woman's question, without a reason and without a doubt.

"Now tell me, dear, I said—Who is he?"

"Dick Jekyll!" cried Grayhurst, leaping to his feet.

"Caryl Thorpe!" said Winifred, sitting still and speaking softly.

"Oh, the Devil's delight!" and he went striding over the floor; with clenched fists.

"Now, sir, if you storm, I'll stop. Come here! Sit closer, and *try both hands*, you troublesome fellow. If you interrupt me again—oh, John! if I had ever seen you look like that!"

"Did I make faces, dear? Well, the dose is nauseous. Thorpe, you say. My darling, is the story such as you can tell to me?"

"To you, John?—O, yes!" and her eyes were bright with the courage of love and faith. "Phyllis had been sent to the Manse with a message—some small household matter—from Mrs. Pennyweight to the Vicar's housekeeper, Dame Trimble. Her errand was done, and she was about to return, when Thorpe, who must have been waiting at his window, called her into the study. He received her with strange affability, holding her hand familiarly as he led her to a seat, and addressing her with a certain silly playfulness. 'Twere not like the Vicar, lady,' Phyllis said; 'twere more like the decanter on the table.'—Was not that shrewd, John, and quaintly put?"

He nodded: "That excellent authority, the decanter, is heard from at last."

“As she sat there, embarrassed, half frightened, anxious to escape, he spoke of her father, ‘my worthy Hindman, a thoroughly good fellow and a capital innkeeper;’ but wondered that he did not have a sharper eye to business than to put his lovely daughter out of sight, when the fame of her remarkable beauty should be making the fortune of *The Chequers*.—

“John dear, I can not go on with the shameful tipsy stuff; you know the strain. He sat there holding her hand, growing more and more reckless, trying to taint the imagination and turn the head of the helpless thing, who could not assail him, who could only tremble and cry. Then he arose and closed the door; and pretending to pity and console her, suddenly grasped her in his brutal arms, and kissed her most offensively, whispering—Oh, John! whispering—”

“Stop! By Heaven, this is too much! I forbid you, Winifred, to defile the tender purity of your own mind, or my honorable thought of that poor child, with another word of this loathsome business. There, dear! don’t cry, don’t cry!”

“That is all, John. I do not know what he said; when Phyllis came to that, she covered her ears with her hands, and ran from me distracted, crying, ‘O what ever did I do? what ever did I do?’

“My love, I humbly thank my Lord and Father, that He has been graciously pleased to cast my

lines in this obscure and peaceful place, where I have never known a wanton woman or a profligate man.—When all the house was still, I led Phyllis to my room, and there I saw the most shameful sight I have ever seen: the marks of an English clergyman's polluting fingers in the tender flesh of a chaste young girl."

The American sat silent and thoughtful; here was serious work for him.

"And now, John, what are we to do—you and I? for the Squire, and Dick, and Barbara, are out of the question."

"Yes," said Grayhurst, "there must be no scandal. You are sure that Phyllis will be silent?"

"Never fear. Her reserve and self-control are remarkable; and now she feels that a great shame has been put upon her, and she would hide it by any means. It was in her dismay and horror, and her great fear of Thorpe, that she fled to me. She says she broke away from him, she knows not how, and hid for hours in the churchyard, waiting for the dark, that she might make her way unseen, to Brignal. She fears the violence of her father; she has a keen sense of Barbara's measured scorn; she spoke with touching pity of the Squire's outraged pride, for she is devoted to the sweet old man; but more than all, and with a strange persistence dwelling upon it, recurring to it again and again, she seemed to dread the impetuous temper of Jekyll. When I suggested—it was

just my cunning, John—that he might be the right man to deal with the Vicar, she cried ‘O, no! O, no!’ and fell on her knees, clasping my hands, and imploring me to ‘let the poor Vicar go. ’Twere but the wine, lady; ’twere only the wine. And what am I, that gentle folks should be hurt for me? Mr. Jekyll, he did never like the Vicar; and oh! but he be a wild gentleman, when his blood is up—that hot and hasty! Mr. Jekyll he would just ruin us all.’

“So I said, Mr. Grayhurst then? Shall I speak to Mr. Grayhurst, Phyllis? And John, what do you think she did, that sagacious girl? She smiled through her tears, and kissed my hand, and smiled again, and said, ‘You know best, lady.’”

“We must bribe Phyllis,” said Grayhurst, “or we are lost. Now, Winifred, you know these people, and I must be guided by you. You have said that the others are out of the question. The Squire, because—”

“Because he would be overwhelmed with shame and remorse. It was he, you remember, who imagined (dear heart!) that he had found a fine lover for his passive niece. Besides, I have never seen the Squire angry but once. I pray that I may never see that again.”

“And Jekyll?”

“Would surely horsewhip Thorpe, in the High-street.”

“Then Grayhurst?”

“Ah! if you will, John—for Barbara’s sake.”

“You and I then, Winifred, will persuade the gentle shepherd of Overstoke to skip to fresh pastures of enterprise, where ‘livings’ are got by the sweat of men’s faces.

“By the by, your ladyship! While your ministering angel was tearing away toward Ausibel, with a mind set on liniment and old Nanny’s legs, I saw him, with these eyes, in plain moonlight, ride by The Chequers, with a light heart and a flowing rein—Funny! is it not?”

CHAPTER XX.

THE OTHER WOMAN.—BARBARA'S TRAP.—EXIT
VICAR.

THE Squire had gone to Ausibel, to dine with the justices at the Hotel Montmorenci, ("Bag-o'-Nails" aforetime), that degenerate hostelry which had so scandalized the devout conservatism of Toby Hindman, by its effeminate sign and its masculine bar-maid; and Miss Lynn was left to her own devices at Overstoke, to extract such diversion as she might from the companionship of her interesting maid. For Phyllis's mind, which had once been as candid and plain to the ken of her young mistress as a diagram of their simple parish, had lately developed regions of emotional mist and haze, which continually challenged this adventurous Barbara to excursions of exploration,—in the hope of penetrating, by routes not laid down in the bed-room map, to some centre of startling discovery. And to-day she hovered on the borders of Phyllisland, and reconnoitered for an opening, with cunning strategy of studied unconsciousness and friendly spite.

The young women had the house to themselves ; even Mrs. Pennyweight, emboldened by the Squire's rare absence, had gone to Yawdley, to accomplish some small shopping on her own account ; and in Barbara's chamber Phyllis had been "doing" her lady's hair.

"You are a patient creature, Phyllis," said Barbara ; "and your self-control is lovely. I know it would often be a great comfort to you to give my hair a vicious twitch ; but you never do. If I were in your place, and you in mine, I should feel like strewing the floor with that distracting crop of yours, or snatching your scalp, like a red Indian. By the by, I wonder if that is the reason there are so many bald Americans, as I have read. I must ask Mr. Grayhurst if he wears his own scalp."

"Ah, but you must be just joking, miss. Who could ever think of hurting this pretty hair ? And I'll tell you a secret, Miss Barbara : I did steal some—twenty long fine hairs I did steal, and now another one—see ! that is one hair for every year of your life ; and when you are the Vicar's lady, and do have a smarter maid, and I do go back to my place in the inn, that shall be my keepsake, and I'll be fain to wear it in my little gold locket o' Sundays, along with my mother's that's gone."

"Now I know, Phyllis, why at times I sit here forgetting and remembering : not I, but that sweet little Barbara, docile and grateful, and good ! with

my mother in my heart, and an angel at my back hair. Oh! you, you, you! Why ever are you a mere woman,—to be fondled, and feared, and envied, and hated, and wooed? Serving me like a saint, and searching me through and through, like a witch. Oh! you, you, you!”

And thrice she kissed the scared, astonished maid, in headlong fashion: “an English girl that hath a devil;” and her devil rent her with a passion of sobs.

“Hold your tongue!” she cried. Phyllis had not uttered a word, but only waited, tender and troubled.

“Sit here, on this stool!” said Barbara. “I must know how it feels to do the other woman’s hair;” and now she laughed, an odd little laugh, with a thought in it.

Phyllis sat at Barbara’s feet; the pins were drawn, and the auburn billow rolled softly to the floor. Barbara gathered it in her hands, and turned it in fine masses, now to the light, now to the shade, to catch the sheen or the shadow of it, marking how the gold did deftly blend with the red and brown.

“Phyllis,” said Miss Lynn, “I have something to tell you, that I really think you ought to know.”

The girl did not start, nor turn her head; her sudden pallor was not seen.

“I trust it be nowt that’s sad, miss.”

"That depends upon how it might strike the average angel. Most women would be amused. Phyllis, you are absurdly and tediously beautiful."

"That be no blame to me, miss; nor any joy. I'd fain change with Christie Breme, but for the love I bear her."

"Oh! you know it then, the difference between Christie and Phyllis."

"Ay! I do know the difference, and I'm not proud of it; but 'tis not the kind you think. I'd give this poor foolish face o' mine, and thankful, for the least o' Christie's heart."

"What nonsense! when you can get a whole heart for it, in a fine husband. If I were a man, I'd fight a parish and fool a county for you. And what a pair we'd be, Phyllis! Oh, for coat and trousers, and beard and swagger, and the domineering stride! I'm sure I'd make a most oppressive man. I have the height: why, I'm almost as tall as Mr. Jekyll; and the insolence? that's easy; and the heartlessness would come naturally—bullying you, my dear. Stand up, and let us take a look at ourselves in the glass. Now, that's what I call a sonnet in hair."

"Oh, oh!" cried Phyllis. "How ever did you do it? Was there ever any thing so lovely? Ah, but I'm ashamed, miss! I do feel like a lady."

"You conceited, red-headed thing! You mean you feel as a lady feels when she looks like a

delusion and a snare. Now, I have an idea: Get out my rose-pink gown with the black Spanish lace, the one I astonished the Aldridges with, when they came over from Great Barr to surprise us so tremendously; and I'll show you something——

“Something more than
Taffeta or tissue can,
Or rampant feather, or rich fan.”

Phyllis stared, and Barbara laughed.

“Well, the rose-pink, quick!—so! Now put it on.”

“Oh, Miss Barbara! I never could.”

“Pshaw! Do as I tell you. I must be amused; 'tis deadly dull here.”

And as the girl retired, reluctant and shame-faced, to the dressing-room, Barbara drummed on a window-pane, humming a tune, and watching the avenue; now drumming, now humming, now both together, but always watching the avenue; and once she stamped her little foot impatiently.

Then Phyllis came forth, and stood blushing; and Barbara, turning, gazed and gazed with parted lips, and drew a long breath of admiration.

“No wonder!” she murmured. Then aloud: “Well, how does it fit? Like a glove. What's the matter?”

“The bodice, miss—it be that low; you would not be pleased.”

"'Tis the fashion, you goose; nothing could be more correct. Now, you *look* like a lady."

"If you please, miss, 'twere nicer when I felt like one."

"You vision! Oh, for the trousers and the swagger! Phyllis, let's run away—to America;" and she sang,

"On johnny-cake the ladies dine,
And all the girls are superfine
In that new coun-terie."

"Barbara! Where are you?" cried a voice from the stair.

"Who is that? Mr. Jekyll? Yes, Dick—in a moment. Now, Phyllis, stay so till I return; Mr. Jekyll will not remain long. Do not remove the dress, or meddle with it. I know a trick or two with Spanish lace that will make a poem of you, and set you to music;" and she ran lightly down to the hall.

Jekyll had come over to tell the Squire of a promising colt he had found, on a farm near Ausibel: "a beauty," he said, "for a light weight; he will make a capital mount for you, Bab."

Then Barbara spoke of Grayhurst; what had become of him? Why was he not with Jekyll?

"I parted from him at the lodge. He said he must not inflict his dulness upon you."

"What notion is that? He is never dull."

"So I have always thought, until yesterday and

to-day. Now I suspect he is growing home-sick ; I found him silent, falling into brown studies ; once or twice I could have fancied his manner was cold ; but that's absurd—the dear old boy ! ”

“ What can it be ? Surely not Winifred,” said Barbara ; “ she could never be such a simpleton.”

“ What has Winifred to do with it ? ”

“ Everything. Where are your eyes ? ”

“ If you mean they have come to a sentimental understanding——”

“ A neat way of putting it, Dick ; but slightly finical. I think they are going to ‘ make a match ’ of it : which is vulgar perhaps, but perspicuous.”

“ Hallelujah ! If the production of matches is a celestial industry, I think we may look for the factory mark on such a coupling as that. Those two must have been assigned to each other from the beginning of the world.”

“ I thought *you* burned your candle before the shrine of Saint Winifred.”

“ Once I did, devoutly ; but she snuffed it out. By the by, has Grayhurst ever called at the Manse ? ”

“ Not he ; the Manse disapproves of the Yankee. Why do you ask ? ”

“ Because, after he left me, he turned into the Manse lane.”

“ That might be anything or nothing,” said Barbara. “ He could have no errand there, unless for a reading of the banns : ‘ John Grayhurst,

bach'lah; Winifred Blythe, spinstah.' Oh, no! the poor things cannot have come to such a pass yet. Dick, shall we never know how Cicely's ribbon found its way into your pocket?"

"There is no clue," he said. "I could swear I had but the one, when we went to Brignal that morning."

"It could not be Winifred who found it. She knows the gown, and would have recognized the ribbon at once. Then she would surely have spoken: to put me on my guard, or to reproach me perhaps."

"I doubt that, Barbara. You must dispose of Winifred's pride, before you can decide upon her methods. She is too proud to intrude upon your confidence, and too young to pose as your keeper. If with these mad pranks of yours, you precipitate a scandal or a panic, your folly must be on your own head."

"Don't scold, Dick! Who found the ribbon?"

"How should I know?"

"A woman, of course."

"Why of course?"

"Because a great blundering man would either have burned the rag and held his tongue, or he would have restored it to me at the dinner-table in a set speech; while a woman would reflect how she herself would feel, to know that another woman, somewhere concealed, had captured a secret of hers; and she *must* contrive to torment

me so, or burst; not necessarily because she is cruel or vindictive, but simply because she is a woman."

"Then who is she, in this case?"

"She who was first to hear the story of the ghost from the lips of Bessie Mann; she who was especially impressed with the circumstance of the missing ribbon; she who was quick to discover that such a bow was gone from its place in a gown of mine—Phyllis."

"And why should the girl take pleasure in tormenting you, as you say?"

"Because when she is not an angel, she is a lady's-maid; and if a man may never be a hero to his *valet-de-chambre*, what a shabby creature a woman must seem to the other woman who plays on her back hair?"

"Granting all that, why should Phyllis attack you over my shoulder?"

"Perhaps she fancies you are fond of me, Dick. Ladies'-maids spin plots, and weave romances."

"You are imaginative, Barbara. The girl was not at Brignal."

"But she is at Overstoke, and at The Chequers, and in the avenue and the paths; and she might at any time be at your elbow, or in your pocket, without your knowledge, so grandly unconscious are you of her existence. You would hardly be aware of her, if she waited with her arms around your neck.—Here's another shirt-button coming

off. Dick, that dreadful old Nanny Cole neglects you shamefully. Winifred and I must go to the Croft, and inspect your things—you lone lorn bachelor! This is the third loose button within a week; I'm ashamed of you. Wait in the Library, while I get needle and thread."

He obeyed, smiling, well pleased with her playful friendliness, while she called to Phyllis from the hall. There were low words of remonstrance and entreaty, cut short by Barbara's insistence, not unkind yet peremptory:

"Nonsense! What of that? Come at once: I am waiting."

And the obedient creature came—one great, trembling blush! For a moment she hesitated at the door, and took in every part of the room in a sweeping glance of embarrassment and apprehension; and she seemed relieved at first, seeing no one but Barbara.

"Come in, Phyllis. Have you brought them? Let me see the needles; this one will do, I think. Now, Dick! Bring your shabby button."

Phyllis murmured "Oh!" and with fear in her eyes shrank toward the door; but Barbara with a careless touch detained her.

Then Jekyll advanced, and on the threshold of the Library stood astounded, beholding the girl transformed.

"Do you recognize that dress, Dick? I wore it when the Aldridges were here, you remember. I

have given it to Phyllis, and we were trying it on when you came. It suits her nicely: don't you think so?"

"Too long, is it not?" said Jekyll, moving toward the window, with the air of one for whom the reply could have no interest.

"Of course: I am so much taller, you know; but that is easily corrected. Now, Phyllis, thread your needle."

The girl, now supernaturally pale, shivered slightly as she endeavored to obey; but her trembling hands refused the task, and she raised her lovely eyes to her tormentor in a look so piteous, so appealing—

"Those needles are difficult; or is your thread too coarse?" said Barbara. "Let me try;" and in an instant, without a tremor—"There!"

"Now, Mr. Jekyll, where's your button? Phyllis, have you scissors? Yes?—Oh! Oh!"

"What is it?" inquired Jekyll.

"So awkward! so stupid! I have pricked my finger badly. There! I thought so—a great blotch of blood on your linen. That's ominous, ominous! and I give it up. Finish this, Phyllis."

Mechanically the girl took the needle; her face was ashy and her lips were set; and her neck and bosom were as heaving marble.

And Barbara stood, nursing her wounded finger with her lips—and watching.

Jekyll remarked that the Squire should be returning soon.

Phyllis's needle bungled wildly.

And Barbara stood watching.

Then Phyllis slid softly to the floor, and lay there white and still.

"What's this?" cried Jekyll, "What the devil have you done?" as he kneeled, and tenderly supported the beautiful head.

"She seems to have fainted," said Barbara, with sweet composure. "Speak to her, while I go for water;—*kiss her, Dick!*"

And when Miss Lynn was gone, he did kiss her; and her eyes were opened and she knew Devil Dick,—with his finger on his lips.

Then Barbara returned with the water. "The girl seems better now," said Jekyll. "I suppose you know what to do for her;" and he went out.

And Barbara smiled; but when presently Jekyll stood at the door unseen, and looked within, he saw her seated on the floor in tears, gently caressing and comforting Phyllis.

When Grayhurst, leaving the highway, turned into the Manse lane, as Jekyll had seen, he walked slowly, pondering gravely, again and again stopping, as if to gather his thoughts together, and marshal the forces of his feelings and his judg-

ment; but there was no feebleness of purpose: his face was set toward the Manse.

Half way, he met a woman coming from the vicarage, a cottager of the humbler class, hewer of wood and drawer of water; and under the threadbare shawl and hood, shabby but decent, he recognized Jael Tripp, the shoemaker's wife. The good creature was crying; and as she drew near she wiped her eyes, in the jerky way of poor people to whom tears are a hindrance, and would have passed him with a shy curtsy, hiding her trouble; but he detained her.

"Good day, Mrs. Tripp! Nothing wrong at home, I hope. How is it with Heber, and the child?"

"The child she be fine and hearty, my duty to you, sir. But my poor man—ah! but he be down low, sir, wi' the fever; and he wi' a rare big job from Ausibel, and never so much as a lad to help."

"I have not heard that he was ill."

"'Twere only sin' last night, sir, that he were to say bad. Three days he were that sore, wi' the misery and the shiverin'; but so long as he could work, there were the work a-starin'. Ah! sir, the likes o' you can never know what it is to have work a-waitin' and a-starin' and a-fairly swearin' at ye, and you just daft-like an' dazed, a-wonderin' what's this that's come to yer head an' yer hands. But last night it did grip him strong—the fever,

sir; and the man did burn and toss and rave. This mornin', Janet Drum she did run to Yawdley for the doctor; happen he's there by now; but Heber he did think it were death; and nothin' would do but I must fetch the Vicar, to read the sick prayers, and speak a good word for him to the Lord; for he were a good shoemaker, sir."

"And the Vicar is coming?" inquired Grayhurst, for the first time turning to retrace his steps.

"Comin', is it sir? not he! He would not see me even, but did bid me stand outside the door. It were the poor gal that brought the word, and she did cry, and beg me to forgive her. It were just a nuisance, he says; and did I think he were a fool, to pison hissself in a fever hole for every scary chaw-bacon in the parish. I were to go back, he says, and tell my man 'twere the 'poticary he wanted, and not the parson; and as for the prayers, any body that could read would do for that, he says."

"Go home, Mrs. Tripp. Here, take this!"—the woman took the coins in a bewildered, wondering way, and forgot to thank him. "Send Janet to Miss Blythe. Tell Heber I will be there soon, to read for him. Go now!"

And he turned and strode toward the Manse, with a stern face.

The brass knocker was not a light one, and the American's stroke was not meek. The Vicar, in his study, sprang to his feet.

"Is that idiot here again?" he cried. In another moment, stepping into the hall, he saw the American standing in the open door; then he retired precipitately, and waited until the house-keeper's daughter brought him a card:—Mr. John Grayhurst. He snatched it from her hand impatiently; then held it for some moments, as if perusing it intently; then sat musing, with a far-away look; then turned abruptly to the girl, and began with "what?"—but stopped there.

"Put away the decanter, and hand me that book. Now, show him in here."

"To what circumstance am I indebted for this pleasure?" said the Vicar, rising.

"Is it a pleasure?"

"A form of words," said Thorpe lightly. "Possibly you may make it a pleasure."

"Let us see," said the American. "Of course I am here strictly on business."

"On business? I cannot imagine——"

"How could you, Mr. Thorpe? But do invite me to be seated; it is customary, I believe."

The Vicar bowed coldly, and with a wave of the hand indicated a chair.

"Thank you; you are very kind. Now, sir, when do you leave?"

"Leave? leave?—what? where?"

"This house, this parish, this county, this country, this world!"

The Vicar started; and yet not without a cer-

tain embarrassment, not proper to a man wholly taken by surprise.

"I am always prepared for eccentricities from your countrymen;" he said; "but hardly for impertinences that only drink or delirium could excuse."

"And yet nothing could be more sober," said the American, "nothing more sane; nothing more practical and to the point. My countrymen reserve their eccentricities and impertinences for their social diversion; in business their practice is severely common-place; and I said I came here on business."

"Then come to your business, if you please, with less circumlocution."

"That is well put; for I am consuming your time, and your time is valuable. Mr. Thorpe, you are surprised to see me here; and yet for the first time you must have derived a degree of pleasure from my coming—the pleasure of relief."

"I certainly do associate a sense of relief with your visit," said the Vicar, "but I find it prospective; *you* apply it at the wrong end."

"That is clever," said the American; "you will make yourself felt in your new and more congenial vocation."

"Indeed! And to what sphere have you assigned me?"

"Nature designed you for the law. But to return to our business: You felt relieved when I

came, because you were expecting the father of Phyllis Hindman with a cudgel."

"It's a lie, sir! it's a lie!" shouted Thorpe, springing to his feet.

"What is a lie?"

The Vicar had lost his head; and now he was appalled by his own blunder: too late. "What is the lie?"

"That plausible hussy, for an end of her own, has set on foot some infamous invention. I swear—"

"Pray spare yourself, Mr. Thorpe. The moral floundering of an intellectual man is not an agreeable spectacle; although it is to your credit that you are evidently not what your countrymen term 'a cool hand;' but if you are to lose your head so helplessly in every strong situation, I cannot promise you an illustrious success in your new career. Your 'infamous invention' becomes a formidable indictment, in the light of your own evidence, and you are indebted to the purity and the loyalty of that 'plausible hussy' for an impunity which many a better man has missed. At this very moment my ingenuity is taxed to protect you; or rather to avert a scandal with which my friends are threatened, even though I incur the imputation of conniving at your escape. And lest you should ascribe to me the least emotion of generosity, I frankly assure you that I should derive more satisfaction from your exposure in

the old pillory at Yawdley than I ever did from your appearance in the pulpit at Overstoke."

With blazing eyes and arm upraised, Thorpe advanced, and halted; but the American neither halted nor heeded.

"This is Thursday, Mr. Vicar. If before next Sunday you have not disappeared for all time from this community, it will not be your privilege to choose between the public denunciation of Squire Shustoke, the horse-whip of Mr. Jekyll, and the horse-pond of Toby Hindman; for I can promise you all three. For all that, I pity you; as I would pity any man in a false position, to whom self-respect is an impossibility by the very conditions of his daily life. You are a victim of a system of moral simony, which tradition has made dangerous by making it respectable."

And without a salutation he departed, leaving the Vicar standing there—stunned.

On Friday, the Reverend Caryl Ethelred Thorpe took the coach for Bolingstone.

There was no service in Overstoke church on the following Sunday.

CHAPTER XXI.

CONFIDENTIAL.—THE ROMANY'S TOKEN.

THE Sylcaster coach, ready for the home trip, was at the door of The Chequers; the stable boys waited at the horses' heads; the passengers were in their places; that sly old buffer, Malt-house of Ausibel, whose head was exceptionally soft for a man in the hardware line, winked and chuckled slyly as he bestowed his ponderous nether man in a back seat, and settled himself with sighs of content, to dream of that buxom bar-maid. And the coach waited for Sylcaster Luke, and Luke, "reading soft mischief in her eye," waited for Dolly, and Dolly waited for what she called "an end" to his fooling. Then from the tap-room came a crash as of crockery, and the hoarse guffaw of a man, mixed with "well-if-ers" in a high key; and Luke ran out, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, with a grin on his face and a posy in his button-hole; and he sprang to the box and seized his "lines" and shouted cheerily, "Hey now, my sonnies!"—till next time.

And within, the buxom bar-maid, having

repaired the ruins of her *coiffure*, proceeded to gather up the fragments of a broken pitcher that strewed the floor, lightening labor with an appropriate ditty :

“I sat down beside her, and gently did chide her,
That such a misfortune should give her such pain.
A kiss then I gave her; and before I did lave her,
She vowed for such pleasure she'd break it again.

“'Twas hay-making season; I can't tell the reason—
Misfortunes will never come single, 'tis plain;
For very soon after poor Kitty's disaster,
The devil a pitcher was whole in Coleraine.”

“And 'twixt clumsiness and love, the devil a pitcher we'll have in this house,” said Toby, surveying from the door the scene of recent conflict and havoc. “But what's the odds? I don't seem to have no respect for pitchers, since I heard that them Vylkes was in the pottery line. All the same, if pewter tankards would suit you and Luke to 'rastle over, you'd obleege me; and you'd find it cheaper in the long run. Leastways, you might try gettin' married; that would stop it. Talk of the tender passion! I wish crockery were as tough.”

“'Tis the awkwardness of the wretch, and so I tell him, Mr. Hindman, sir. He goes at a slight common kiss as if a weak woman was one of his leaders a-kicking. And did you think it was love,

sir? Well, if ever? Luke Crotty, a 'umble 'ostler! and me aspirin' to a genteel ironmonger, at least, if not to a noble, majestic innkeeper, p'raps."

"My dear, aren't you puttin' of it raither strong? I should hardly call it noble; suppose we say superior, or commanding. And majestic? don't that strike you as a teetle lofty, a kind of intrudin' on the Royal Fambly?"

"Ah! Mr. Hindman, sir, you don't know yourself; being a cold widower, with no one to study you and paint your picture, so to speak. Why, sir, that foolish modest you be, I daresn't even say hahn'some, for fear of bringing a blush to your manly cheek."

"Dolly, it were the rule of The Chequers in my father's time, and 'tis the rule in my time, *never kiss your own bar-maid!*—but I feel there's exceptions, when nobody's lookin'."

"Oh! Mr. Hindman, sir, please—well-if-ev—thankee—O!"

"You're a bonny lass, Dolly, and a bright and a sensible; and 'tis a lucky chap that'll get ye. If I was younger I'd make you missus of The Chequers, and we'd arsk no odds of gentle or simple. But 'tis too late now, my dear; I could never look my poor Mabel in the face, if happen she be a-waitin' for me somewheres. Luke he's the lad for you; and when I begin to feel old and lazy—and that's not long to wait—he can come down from the box and take my place, and you

can look after the pitchers and keep a sharp eye on the bar-maid, when Luke's around."

"Ah! Mr. Hindman, sir, but you're good—after all the things I've broke, and me such a temper. But I could never do it, sir; I haven't the heart. Luke Crotty's a good fellow; and make his life a burden, oh! I never could. He'd hang himself."

"Why, don't you care for him, lass?"

"Care for him! I've just gone wild on him."

"Then where's the trouble?"

"Here, sir,—Me! That raving jealous I am. And oh! Mr. Hindman, sir, words can never express how I do hate a bar-maid."

"That's bad, that's very bad. I never thought I'd live to see it; but if it's to be a case of life or death, we must have a he-one at The Chequers, a good-lookin' he-one."

"Never! That's worse."

"As how?"

"ME!"

Toby turned upon the girl a look of sharp inquiry, that slowly softened and settled in an expression of intelligent and benevolent assent.

"Ah! I see, I see," he said. "Well, a man's a man, I says—good or bad, simple or artful, a man's a man. But a woman!—She's just the Lord's good joke. Fill a pipe for me, lass. Where's Mr. Grayhurst?"

"Gone to Brignal, sir; he knows the way there by himself now. And what's come over him?"

sitting around owling, and making big eyes at nothing. There's a woman on his mind, I fancy, and her name's Lady Goodluck."

"Who says that?"

"Christie Breme; and she's sure to be right, she's so ugly. Trust them ill-favored women for sharp eyes and sound sense. There's nothing in their looking-glasses to interest 'em; so they can give their minds to other folks' chances. A beauty, like Lady Goodluck, can no more keep a lover hid from a faithful fright, like Christie Breme, than she can keep him from slipping into her dreams by bolting her door at night."

"And what does Christie say?"

"She says Mr. Grayhurst do just worship the ground where Miss Winifred's foot has trod. There it goes again; them frights do always run to poetry, poor things."

"H'm! I guess not," said Toby. "I warrant the ground Mr. Grayhurst has been a-goin' down on his knees to is the kind that 'pans out rich,' as he calls it. There's more sweat than gold in our old-fashioned Midland clods; and the oats and carrots don't pan out so rich that a man should have any call to make a heathen pagan of hisself."

"Ah! Mr. Hindman, sir, that superior you are now, your mind it scorns to stoop to the figures o' speech. But when you were frisky and went courtin', sir, I warrant your mouth were full of the language of love."

“Now, Dolly, there’s where ye’re wild. When I went sweetheartin’ my figgers of speech was in the bank at Ausibel; and the only langwige o’ love I knew was a hearty hug for my lass, and a hard fist for the chap that miscalled her. But ’tis a comfort to think that Mr. Grayhurst’s langwige o’ love is honest English. He might ’a’ been a Portigee or a Frenchman—Lord deliver us!”

“Do you think he’ll take her away to America, sir?”

“Would he take the sunshine out o’ the gardens, and the smoke out o’ the chimblies, and the songs out o’ the children’s mouths, and the comfort out o’ the old dames’ joints? What would Yawdley be, or Overstoke, without Lady Good-luck?—Sunday without bells, Christmas without holly.”

“Or The Chequers without Phyllis.”

“Ay, my dear! that were so once; but it be different now. What’s come to my Mabel’s lass, I wonder; what’s gone with her laugh, and her tricks, and her songs, and the pretty coaxin’ ways o’ her? A year or two ago, and The Chequers were full o’ Phyllis; not loud, you know, but winsome and cheery, and sociable as a wren. Now there’s trouble in her very smile, and her sweetness is all patience. If ’twere any house but Overstoke, and any master but Squire Randal, and any lady but her own old playmate, I’d fancy ’twere the service that hung heavy on her.”

“ Now that’s just the difference between a man and a woman. Here’s a man with a superior mind, and ’tis no use to him. You might as well be deaf and blind, sir; you might as well be a clod, like Malachi Drum, or a natural, like Bucky Boots. Only lend me the leavings of your talents and powers, and I’ll pick up more in a month than you’ll go stumbling over in a year. Now here’s a strapping country lass; she’s healthy; she’s pretty enough to be hateful, if she was not so tiresome sweet; and she has wit enough to have her own way; she’s got a heavenly home, and a beautiful father to fool, and friends that are ready to fight for her—the very women forgive her for being a beauty; and yet this girl mopes and pules, and slinks away in poky corners, with trouble in her smile, as you say, and no temper to speak of. Now, what’s the matter with her? ”

“ Sometimes I misdoubt if she ever quite got over the measles.”

“ Well—if ever! That I should live to hear it called measles. Why didn’t you say mumps. Well, did ever? Oh! you babe and suckling!”

“ Now there you are, Dolly, gone wild again. What be you a-drivin’ at now? ”

“ LOVE! Love, I tell you, sir; and you couldn’t see it, that blind you are, if ’twere broad as the church and high as the steeple; and you couldn’t hear it, that deaf you are, if archangels were to blow you up with clarions.”

"Hoot, lass! What stuff is this? Where's your man?"

"And you think there's no man. Did you ever see a toper that couldn't find his go o' gin, if you was to set him down in the great desert of Sarah? and did you ever see a love-sick maid that couldn't find a man on a desert island?"

"Then who is he?"

"Don't ask me, Mr. Hindman, sir. 'Tis not for a bar-maid to meddle with a lady's-maid's concerns. Only the next time Phyllis is at The Chequers, and there's any good-looking mischief around, just you fetch out your superior mind, and wind it up, and set it a-going!"

Just then Bucky Boots came to the door, and imparted to the intellectual situation a new element of interest, by the unusual perturbation of his countenance, habitually stolid save for the eccentric agitation of the ears.

"What is it, Bucky?"

The lout stood shuffling, first on one foot then on the other, one hand behind him, excitement expressed in the wabbling of his ears.

"Him, maister! That gipsy devil, 'twere him!" and he indicated the whereabouts of his enemy with a backward jerk of his thumb; for Bucky's aversion to the bailiff was extreme, and the epithets he was accustomed to apply to him were not complimentary.

"Kit Abershaw? Where is he?"

"In the stable, maister; 'twere him."

"As how? What's wrong wi' the bailiff?"

"Devil Dick's saddle, he did cunjur it."

"Dolly, what do the poor chap mean?" inquired Toby, always slow to interpret the jerky revelations of this smutty caricature of Sir Hector Vylke.

As he turned to the bar-maid for help, that canny damsel, keenly eyeing Boots, was aware of a wink, and an energetic signal delivered with both ears.

"'Tis but his gibberish, sir," she said, speaking low. "Something about Abershaw meddling with Mr. Jekyll's saddle. You might see for yourself, sir, if the man's in the stable."

Hindman took the hint, and went.

"Now, Bucky! speak quick. What did the bailiff do?"

"Maister Jekyll's saddle, he did cunjur it, the gipsy devil!"

"Conjure it? How? Show me."

All this time Bucky had held one hand behind him. Now, with cunning deliberation, as if to make the most of his importance, he brought it in front, and showed a bit of red rag.

With strange consternation Dolly snatched it from him, and spread it open on her palm. "Oh! oh!" she cried; and with a ghastly face, and eyes fixed in horror upon the thing, she staggered backward and fell into a chair.

"Hush, Bucky! be still!"—for the frightened lad would have fled from the room.

"Where did you find this?"

"In Devil Dick's saddle 'twere; 'twixt the pad and the flap; the gipsy he did put it there."

"Did you see him do it?"

"Ay! did I. What be eyes for?"

"Did he know you saw him?"

"Not him. I were asleep. He, he!"

"What did he do? Tell me, Bucky."

"He did come sneakin', spyin'; but Bucky Vylke were snorin'—So. He, he! Then he did fetch *that* from his pocket. Then he did fetch a knife from his sleeve. Then he did hold that up agin the door. Then he did punch it wi' his long knife. Then he did go to Devil Dick's saddle, and fix it in the buckle o' the stirrup-strap, under the flap. And Bucky Vylke he were snorin'—So. He, he! Then that gipsy devil he did sneak away. Then I did come here:—that's all."

"You are a good lad, Bucky; you are a bright lad; and you shall be my sweetheart. You must give this to me, and you must tell nobody, *nobody*. Now run to the stable."

And Bucky went, flattered and elated, leaving in Dolly's hands a bit of red flannel, cut in the shape of a heart, with a slit in the middle of it.

In the afternoon, when the breeze languished, and the air was still sultry and somnolent, though

the nights were cool—in the drowsy afternoon, when all the house was hushed, and the cat and the coach-dog napped, and Toby Hindman, with no companion but his pipe, snored in his big chair in the tap-room—John Grayhurst sat in the porch at The Chequers, “owling and making big eyes,” his chair tilted backward and his feet on the rail, *more Americano*.

To him came Dolly, softly moving, demurely inviting attention.

“Do I disturb you, Mr. Grayhurst?”

“Ah, Dolly! is that you? Oh, no; come talk to me. How still it is! Is all England asleep? What o’clock is it?”

“On the stroke of three, sir. ’Tis a dull place for you, Mr. Grayhurst, sir, who have seen the world by sea and land, and slept through all the racket of it. I wonder that the very crickets don’t keep you awake o’ nights. Once, when I had been in London a month, and came back to a roadside inn, I just tossed and fretted and cried all night. I missed the roar of the ’busses; and I did long to jump out o’ bed and smash the hall-clock, the conceited tick of it was that maddening.”

“Did you come here from London, Dolly? I guessed you were not Midland born.”

“Not I, sir—I’m Norfolk; and I came from there to Bolingstone, when my mother died. I have an uncle at Bolingstone, and that’s how we heard of this place at The Chequers, when the

bar-maid was married and went to Sylcaster to live. Then Will Hamper, of the Bolingstone coach, did speak a good word for me to Mr. Hindman, and he sent for me.

“And ’twas thinking of the old home in Norfolk to-day, Mr. Grayhurst, that put it into my head to tell you a little story, if you would not mind my taking the liberty.”

Grayhurst replied with a smile, and set a chair for her. Something in the girl’s manner impressed him; he had rarely beheld her so quiet and so grave.

“Our place in Norfolk was a handy camping-ground for gipsies, sir; and we had them, more or less, all the year round. Since I was a little thing, I can remember their tents, and their kettles, and the straw hoods and red handkerchiefs and gold beads of the women, with their brown babies at their backs. The men were tinkers and peddlers and horse-trainers; and the women made baskets, and sold roots for medicine, and told fortunes. We lived on fair terms with them, and had but little trouble. Of course they would steal, in a small way; but we had learned to wink at that. They were just born gipsies, you see, sir; and nature is stronger than law and bluster. Besides, what’s a fowl, or even a sheep now and then, to a burned rick, or a choked well, or a ham-strung horse? So we kept terms with the Romany people; and since there was no getting rid of them,

we made the best of a bad bargain, and paid the fowl to save the rick.

“All but one man—Joe Bolter, the Norwich carrier. No gipsy for him! Hard words and hard knocks was the best fare he had for them; and they were welcome to that, and plenty of it. The gipsies had their champion wrestlers and boxers, and at every fair they were ready to make a match for a small purse; but not a man in the county could stand up before Joe Bolter. He was a terror with his fists and his grip; and his chief delight in life was to call out the gipsy champions, one after another, and pound the breath out of them, or break their necks or their ribs, tossing them over his head. The mere sight of the carrier was enough to poison a Romany's food and drink.

“Joe was a hard man, but he was fond of his dog—a horrid brute of a bull-dog, with one eye; and the dog loved the man to the death. Either would fight or starve for the other. Grip always went the rounds of the cart; and wherever the beast was, the man was not far off. One night that dog was poisoned; and Joe was like a wild beast. He swore a gipsy had done it, and he went raving through their camp. The men fled right and left; all but one, a sullen young fellow, who stood his ground. Joe cudgeled him senseless, and the man was hurt for life.

“Three months went by; summer had come,

and the nights were hot. In the carrier's house it was close and sweltering; but under the trees, where the cart stood, the breeze was sweet. One night, Joe tossed some blankets into the cart, and slept there. Next morning he was found cold in his own blood, stabbed to the heart.

"But here was the strange part of it, sir. The carrier had left his jacket hanging on a peg in the house; and when they were making ready to bury him, somebody, looking in the pockets for the tickets for his parcels and calls—you know, sir,—found a scrap of red flannel in the shape of a heart, with a knife-stroke in the middle of it.

"When the neighbors saw that, they cried 'the Romany token! the Romany token!' and they knew that Joe Bolter had died by a gipsy's knife. That ugly rag was passed from hand to hand; even the children shuddered at it, and dreamed about it. 'Twas cruel to show it to little creatures like me, sir; from that day to this, I can never see a bit of such red stuff but my heart stands still, and I think of that dreadful time."

And then she drew from her pocket the thing itself, and laid it on Grayhurst's knee.

"So, this is the Romany token," he said, as he turned it about in his hand; "and you made this, Dolly, to show me what it was like?"

"No, Mr. Grayhurst, sir. Kit Abershaw fastened that under the flap of Mr. Jekyll's saddle to-day; and Kit Abershaw is a gipsy."

“For God’s sake, girl! What are you saying?”

She told him the story, word for word, with Bucky’s strong simplicity; and at the end broke down in sobs and tremors.

“Oh, make haste, Mr. Grayhurst, sir! and tell Mr. Jekyll; and make him arm himself; and you too, sir, you too. Oh, make haste!”

“Yes, yes, Dolly! but be calm now, or you will be heard; and this is dark business. But the man must be mad; this rag would hang him—don’t you see?”

“Ay, sir! he knows that well enough; but he will not wait to be hung.”

The American caught her meaning. “You think him so desperate as that?”

“Mr. Grayhurst, by myself I have been reading the black thoughts of Kit Abershaw all summer, and I know them by heart. O sir! find Mr. Jekyll quickly, and put him on his guard. Please! please!”

“Call for my horse, Dolly; and do not tremble so. The gipsy shall have two of us to deal with.”

But that same afternoon, Devil Dick had ridden to Sylcaster, taking the shorter way by the New Inn road; and Grayhurst did not find him until the day after the morrow. Thus they were separated by the two days most memorable in the lives of both.

CHAPTER XXII.

MILDRED'S CHILD.—AT LAST!

SWEET day! "so cool, so calm, so bright! the bridal of the earth and sky:" a sabbath stillness, and a veiled reflection of the peace of God, hung upon the house at Overstoke. The Squire lay back in his great arm-chair, and surrendered his soul to the spell of memories that were very tender, and a melancholy that was very sweet; while Barbara sat on a stool at his feet and pillowed her cheek on his knee, fondly caressing the gentle hand, where a father's pride and a mother's love were joined to do her service. Ah! strange, capricious, wayward sprite! forever at cross purposes with herself, confronting her own heart with contradictions, what shall we call her *now*? Not Barbara: the name that stands for passionate words and rebellious ways impossible to this pensive, docile, dreamy child, clinging to an old man's knee, and with soft fondling lips communing with an old man's fingers. Not Barbara; for as the Squire stoops, and with brimming eyes lays a tear and a kiss together upon the pretty hair, he mur-

murs "Mildred;" and Golf, watching them from his place on the rug—remembering, discerning, divining, with the gift of a dog's devotion—drags his out-worn limbs, feebly, a little nearer, and licks the passive hand of "Mildred."

No! not Barbara; for the Barbara of Winifred and Dick was a stranger to the Squire; she had never revealed herself to him. She had "appeared" to Winifred, from time to time, as Cicely had appeared to Bessie Mann; she had intercepted Jekyll in the fields and lanes, and lightly challenged him to peer into the heart of her mystery; she had defied the Vicar with many gibes, and put him down with the trick of a spiteful truth; she had jangled for pastime among the very heart-strings of Phyllis, and then soothed and tuned them with an overcoming kiss; she had flashed upon the American in unexpected places, between a sob and a reckless jest, a bitter fling and a song; but she never jarred upon the Squire's "mood serene," nor marred the gracious influence of the hour when he was wont to entertain benignant guests, when Memory came to him with ghostly consolations, and Hope intent on fair, alluring promises. At such times, "Barbara" remained without, and sent in "Mildred's child," to greet and gladden him with Mildred's eyes, to sing old songs to him in Mildred's voice, and with Mildred's simple prattle to entertain him with the travels of a cottager or the adventures of a cow. And

so Squire Randal never knew that "other" Barbara, for whom Winifred was troubled, nor the English girl "that hath a devil," whom Jekyll had discovered; and so it was, that as she so sweetly rested there, with her head upon his knee, he broke the spell of her reverie with a question that only he could have addressed to her without irony or artifice.

"How still you are, my child! Do you miss Caryl so?"

The girl faintly shivered, but did not change her position of repose.

"A little, dear," she said.

"His going surprised me," said the Squire. "He must have been called away suddenly and urgently. Of course he will return soon."

"Perhaps. Why did he go?"

"I know no more than was disclosed in the hurried note he addressed to me from Bolingstone: a family matter of some importance; in Southampton, I believe. No doubt you will get a letter to-day, if he does not appear in person."

"Perhaps; but he may not come—immediately, I mean; and the people must not be left without their service again. 'Tis many a day, I fancy, since the bells of Overstoke were silent so. 'Twas very sad; the poor folk seemed quite lost, shaking their heads and whispering, as if they felt an ill omen in the air. It must not be so again, dear; they must have their bells next Sunday.

Promise me that the rector of All-Souls shall come over from Ausibel—that sweet old man!”

“I will write to him to-day, child; and Dick shall take my note, and bring his answer. But ’twill not be necessary after all, I am sure; we shall have Thorpe here. Indeed, I never thought you would miss him so.”

Barbara sat up, and gazed straight into the Squire’s eyes—a look that he could never have forgotten, if only he could have understood. Then, with a sad smile and a sigh, she resumed her childish posture, with her arm around his knee.

“Yes,” she said, “they must have their service and their bells next Sunday; and Winifred must bring the flowers for the chancel, and marshal all her children. You will surely write to Mr. Pentecost to-day, uncle?”

“Surely, Barbara; and Dick shall take the letter.”

“But Dick is not here. Hindman says he rode to Sylcaster yesterday; so Phyllis reports.”

“Indeed! but he must return immediately. He can have nothing at Sylcaster to detain him.”

“I hope not!” said Barbara, raising her head. “Oh! I hope not.”

“I do not understand. You hope he will not return?”

“Not to-day. Why should he? ’Tis so dull for him here, poor fellow! Even a change to

rusty old Sylcaster must be a relief for him.—
Dear, why is Kit here to-day?”

“Abershaw? he is not here. He may be at the lodge or the stables now; but I sent him to Wynhold this morning, and he can not have been about the house. Why do you ask?”

“Did I not see or hear him? Or was it one of the stable men? He may know of Dick, whether he has returned or not. Please inquire, dear.”

And as the Squire rose, and left the room, thinking only to humor her, she was so strange and so sweet to-day, Barbara grasped her shoulder, with a motion and expression of pain, and with fear and foreboding in her eyes.

“All the morning!” she whispered. “I awoke crying with it. And Kit has *not* been here. What can it mean? Oh, Dick, Dick!”

And she buried her face in the cushion of the great chair, and lay there still:—“Oh, Dick, Dick!” she murmured.

Presently the voice of the Squire, returning, was heard at the door; he was not alone, and in a moment Barbara, composed and self-contained, was exchanging friendly discourse with Golf.

“Abershaw has not returned, dear, and nothing has been heard of Jekyll. But here is Lady Goodluck, come to brighten us; for I have been telling her how dismal we were getting here, without Thorpe, or Dick, or Grayhurst, or Winifred.”

“But now that we have Winifred,” said Bar-

bara, "away with melancholy! Let us engage in some exciting sport, dear—such as reviewing the family portraits, with genealogical applications; perhaps we may discover something startling in the line of heredity, to impart a fresh rapture to Mr. Grayhurst: something in the turn of Cicely Shustoke's nose, to account for the frivolity of Barbara Lynn; something in the lines of the gentle Hugo's brow, to explain the attractive docility of Richard Jekyll. Or we might have in Keyes, to relate romances of the Shustoke plate; or Mrs. Pennyweight, to entertain us with the calamities of the claw-and-ball furniture; or we could make a light excursion to the churchyard, and gayly revel in the parish register."

So suddenly had Mildred's child disappeared; and here was the other Barbara, moved by her imp of the perverse to express her secret trouble in terms of rebellious mockery. The danger signal was not lost upon Winifred, whose advent, albeit with an influence wholly benignant, had evoked the hostile spirits; and she would have exorcised them with a spell of playfulness; "But first," she said, "come and see my Brahma chicks; and I can show you a pig with a keen sense of humor. Christie says 'it be just a-wastin' o' yerself to reason with that pig; the beast be such a light-minded trifler.' She has taught him some uncomical tricks. If you ask him which pig got tipsy, he sits up on his tail, and chuckles and winks."

The Squire, laughing, bestowed a grateful glance on Lady Goodluck; Barbara smiled, and, moved with friendliness, took Winifred's waist in the turn of her arm—as is the way of young women, especially of such as are intimate enemies; but she was not to be caught in any amiable toils, nor diverted from the purpose that lay nearest her heart.

“That pig,” she said, “comes by his gift by metempsychosis. Come up into the gallery, and I'll show you the chuckle and wink of your tipsy trifier in a little crayon portrait of old Boulton of Wynhold, poor Cicely's bugbear.”

The Squire, unobserved by his niece, signaled to Winifred to humor Barbara.

“A wicked libel!” said Lady Goodluck, “to wrong the shoat unborn. Show me your horrid Boulton, and I'll show you my engaging pig.”

And they passed into the hall, and took the stairs to the gallery; but when they reached the upper landing, Barbara took Winifred's hand and led her straight to her own chamber. She seemed to explore the place with a glance, and, going to the dressing-room, looked in. Phyllis was not there. Then she returned to Winifred, and led her to a seat, and embraced her fondly.

“Winifred,” she said, “do you love me?”

“Surely, dear! I have always loved you, ever since the day when those good people from Bolingstone brought to us the shy little maid who was looking for her English uncle.”

"Yes, I remember the child," said Barbara.

"Have we not been playmates, schoolmates, comrades, from that hour to this? Why should I not love you?"

"Then tell me all your secrets."

Winifred smiled: "Where shall I begin?"

"Begin with those eager eyes, which mean Grayhurst; and end with that happy blush, which means Grayhurst. Tell as many pretty lies as you like, dear; only *tell them!*

"I never sat among
The choir of Wisdom's song,
But pretty lies loved I
As much as any King."

"'Tis a pity I cannot amuse you, dear," said Winifred, caressing her; "but I have no lies to tell."

"Then 'tis all true."

"What?"

"Grayhurst."

"Is that *all*?"

"What is there more for you?"

"My Barbara! And are you glad?"

"With all my heart, with all my heart! But oh, Winifred! will he take you away?"

"I think not, dear; I hope not. I could not be happy, far from Brignal."

"Then he will not. Oh! you think I do not know him. Winifred, do you love me?"

"Barbara!"

“Yes, yes ! Then promise me, very solemnly, holding me in your arms here, that you will never leave the Squire, that you will never leave Dick. He always loved *you*, Winifred. Oh, promise me !”

“What is this, Barbara? You are ill. Try to be calm, dear, and tell me what has distressed you so.”

“Nothing, nothing. What should distress me, except the thought of losing you? What would our dear Squire do without you? And what would become of Dick? Promise me, Winifred.”

“Yes, dear ; it shall be as you wish. I will never leave Overstoke, so long as Squire Randal and Dick remain here.”

“How lightly falls the foot of Time, that only treads on flowers !” and Grayhurst had staid late with his love that evening. It was hard upon the stroke of midnight when he left her in the porch, and took his homeward way by the Giddyburn path. The infolding stillness of the Hurst was broken only by the dropping of acorns, the plaint of an enamored wood-owl, or the faint bleating of some orphaned lamb, forlorn in a field beyond : fitting accompaniment to that low song of silence which the formless intelligences of the air delight to sing, when man with all his coarse distractions

has retired, and left the season and the scene to them.

For fear of alarming her, he had forbore from relating to Winifred the incident of the Romany token, and Dolly's grave interpretation of its import; but now his mind took up the thread of its interrupted discourse, and began again to unwind the argument in which the relations of Jekyll and the bailiff were entangled. He had ridden to Wynhold in the morning, and learned from Nanny Cole that Dick's return was not to be looked for until the afternoon of the morrow; and only a certain natural reluctance to attach undue importance to a circumstance more or less fanciful, deterred him from following his friend to Sylcaster. He imagined Jekyll's careless laugh, lightly flouting the absurdity of connecting a tragic purpose with the simple rustic at the lodge—that nondescript “whom no one likes but me; that dull fellow, who never makes a mistake; that slow fellow, who is always on hand.”

And then Grayhurst remembered that he had once come upon Abershaw unawares, when that slow, simple soul was illustrating his own idea of being “on hand,” with hate in his eyes and a bludgeon in his fist.

“That sound I do sleep,” he had explained on that occasion, “I were just muddled like, Mr. Grayhurst, sir.”

“At this very moment,” thought the American,

“he is doubtless enjoying the sleep of the just. As that is always an edifying performance, I think I will take a look at him ;” and turning his back on The Chequers, he took the hedge-path toward the lodge.

As he went, he thought of Dolly’s warning, her agitation, her urgent entreaty that he should arm himself ; his revolver was in his pocket—he wished it at the bottom of the sea ; the stout stick should suffice for any emergency, and he was even ashamed of that. “That I should come among these lowing herds and plodding ploughmen, to play the hoodlum !”

In going to-and-fro at night with Jekyll, between The Chequers and the Croft, he had observed that Abershaw always slept with his window open. To-night it was closed. Dolly had said that Kit had been seen going to Wynhold, on an errand for the Squire ; perhaps he had not returned. He stood by the window, and listened intently ; then at the door—no sound. He invented some plausible pretext for arousing the bailiff :—

“Abershaw !” and he knocked—no answer ; besides, the house proclaimed the absence of its tenant by its own supernatural stillness : a deserted dwelling and a dead body, we always know them so. He entered, and struck a match. Kit’s bunk had not been occupied ; a jacket and a dog-whip lay on the floor, as if the bailiff had

left the house in haste. Then the match went out; he struck another, took up the jacket, felt in one of the pockets, and found a scrap of paper, on which were a few words, clumsy and sprawling—TWYSE IN TH' AVERNOO,—THRE TIMS BY TH' MEER.—WUNCE IN BRIGNEL LAIN.—WUNCE IN HURST A-CRYEN.—SEVEN IT BE, AND WUN TU MENNY.

Grayhurst thrust the paper into his own pocket, threw the jacket on the floor, and went out. At the gate he hesitated—should he return to the inn? Why not? With Jekyll at Sylcaster and Abershaw at Wynhold, evidently there was nothing to be learned here; and the thing to do now was to go home, and to bed. Yet even as he reasoned thus, he had turned into the avenue, and was advancing in the direction of Overstoke House—led by an influence stronger than his logic.

No moon that night; but the sky was cloudless and limpid, no mists hung in the air, and stars strove with stars in vivid and surpassing splendor. But in the avenue, leaf-canopied and curtained, all was dark; between the trees and the carriage-way Grayhurst followed the narrow strip of grass, feeling for the trail with his foot. When he reached the thicket, where he had found Abershaw lurking on the day when he rode with Barbara, and the bailiff's presence was revealed to her so strangely, he suddenly stopped, arrested by

a sound, as of some object moving through the brush, a few rods in advance; but no sooner caught than lost, and all unreal perhaps. Beyond the thicket, his eyes, oppressed by the thick shadows of the avenue, were relieved by a fringe of light, reflected from the mere upon an open space; and here again he paused, imagining that now he *saw* what, but a moment since, he had fancied he heard—some one, some thing, moving in the direction of the house. But this was the witching hour, and his wits were free to play him fantastic tricks.

Emerging from the gloom of the avenue, at last he came into the comfortable light of stars, which while it left details veiled or confused, denoted objects by masses, and defined outlines that might be recognized: such a light as may disclose to you the familiar form of your friend, while it hides the scowl of your foe, and the baleful flash of his eyes.

So far he had come without a purpose; but now the spell of mystery was upon him, the sense of a hostile influence lurking near; and it was in his temper to watch, to challenge, to arrest, he knew not what. He must not linger in the light, and right before him was effectual hiding: a group of small offices, detached and surrounded by tall screens of shrubbery, affording concealed approach even to the wall and windows of the house. Under cover of these, he made his way

to the last and least of them, a little building of brick, used for the storing of kitchen furniture. This was separated from the angle of the great house only by a grassy knoll, surmounted by a close clump of firs, which nearly filled the space between, leaving narrow passage for a convenient path from the front to the rear of the house. Here, under the wall of the little office, the American halted, and waited in the dark,—even wondering at himself, but *waiting*. The spot was well chosen for observation or ambush: the stable-path, by which he had followed Jekyll to Barbara's window on that memorable night, was almost at his feet; and just beyond it, and opposite the angle of the house, was a great oak, ancestral and majestic; as the night breeze shook its branches, he could hear the measured patter of the acorns in the grass. And now he remembered that in this corner of the house, over against the great tree, was the room allotted to Phyllis, where she slept, and to which she retired when Miss Lynn did not require her services or her company. Directly below her window was a side door, opening upon the servants' stair, and only used by Mrs. Pennyweight and the maids.

“Some one coming!”—Grayhurst shrank into the shadow, and held his breath. Steps, light and quick, approached from the front of the house. A form brushed briskly through the firs, stirring them sharply, and appeared in the brighter space

beyond. The American, astonished, hardly refrained from uttering the name aloud :

“Jekyll !”

On the edge of the grass, in front of the great oak, he stopped, and looked up at the girl's window ; while one might count twenty he waited so. Then he turned, and retired under the great tree. With eyes strained to pierce the shadows, Grayhurst saw that he stooped, and seemed to pick up something, one by one :—

“Acorns !”

Then he came into the light again, and stood where he had been before. There was an upraised arm, the jerk of an upward toss, with the little jump that is apt to accompany the action, and a patter as of nuts upon glass :—

“The window !”

Grayhurst ground his teeth, and gripped his stick.

A minute more, and the window was raised. “Hist !” and an urgent gesture from below invited some one to come down. Evidently there was a signal of consent, for Jekyll crossed the stable-path, and took his stand in the shadow of the house, very near the door, and with his back to the firs : Grayhurst could have reached him with his stick, and the stick trembled in his hand.

The door opened—“Phyllis !”

“My love !” she whispered. “Where are you ? Why are you here ?”

His back was to the bush ; his arms were open to receive her ; she was clasped in his embrace.—

“ Great God ! ” What is this that bursts from the firs ? a furious arm upraised, the flash of a blade in the dark, a downright deadly thrust, and the knife in the air again !

But the blade dropped harmless in the grass ; and the American, throwing his stick away, stood astride the senseless form of the gipsy, while he supported the swooning gentleman in his arms. Then the head fell back upon his shoulder, and there was a piteous murmur and a flutter, as he laid his inert burden in the grass. And Phyllis knelt there, dumb, her hands clasped, and her eyes glowing in the dark.

Then Grayhurst moved to open the coat, that was buttoned closely over his poor friend's breast ; but at the first touch and groping of his hands he uttered a muffled exclamation, and snatching a match from his pocket, tried it, broke it, threw it away, and another and another—till at last a ghastly light fell on the face of Phyllis, and on the gasping victim in the grass, and on a hat that had fallen, and on a *wig* of light brown curls that lay beside it, and on the pale face of Barbara !

Then the eyes of Grayhurst and Phyllis met ; and Phyllis, still kneeling there, covered her face with her hands ; but neither spoke. And strangely it flashed through Grayhurst's mind that here were two women, and *no screaming*.

“Phyllis!”

She did not speak nor move.

“Phyllis, I say! I want your help.”

She was on her feet instantly.

“To the stables, quick! Call up the men. Send them to Yawdley and Ausibel for the surgeons. Tell them to ride hard.”

Like the flash of a white spectre, the girl disappeared in the dark.

Grayhurst glanced at Abershaw, and for the first time thinking of his pistol, laid it ready to his hand; but Kit lay very still.

Then he took off his coat, and rolled it up, to make a pillow for Barbara's head.

He could feel the beating of her heart; and now she opened her eyes, and spoke feebly, in low broken words.

“Grayhurst! Is it you? Ah, yes. Did I not tell you? In the shoulder—strange, strange!”

“Tell Dick I'm glad. For him, for him—you understand?—I am glad.

“Squire—forgive—God bless my squire!”

“Winifred—Grayhurst.” She raised her hand to her lips, and kissed it twice, smiling.

“Tell Phyllis—I'm glad—for Dick—Good-bye!”
Good-bye!

From somewhere in the house came the long quavering howl of Golf. The faithful old hound had scented death.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DEATH RISES TO EXPLAIN.

ALL unnerved and trembling now, the American knelt there, amazed and pity-stricken, and his hot tears fell fast upon the bosom that never more a wave of life should lift; and so Phyllis, returning from the stables, found him; but in a moment he was on his feet, with all his wits about him.

“I roused the men, sir, and they are saddling.”

“What did you tell them?”

“Nothing, sir—only that some one had been hurt. I thought you might need help; so I brought Paisley. You can trust him, sir; he is waiting by.”

“Tell him to run back, and stop the men; the doctors will not be wanted.”

The girl clasped her hands, and a stifled cry broke from her lips.

“Hush, my poor lass!—Send the man at once! Tell him to return here.”

She went, and was back again in a moment.

“Now, Phyllis, go to Miss Lynn's dressing-room; light the lamp, open the window, and wait there for me. Be careful! let no one hear you.”

She disappeared by the servants' door; and presently Grayhurst, hearing the man returning, went to meet him.

"Paisley, Abershaw has been hurt. Tell the men to put a horse to a light cart, and wait with it at the head of the avenue. Stay with them until that is done. Then leave one man with the cart, and let the other come here, with you.—Stay! fetch a few turns of strong cord; bed-cord will do. Be quick, and make no noise."

When the man had gone, Grayhurst raised the lifeless form of Barbara, and removed it to a concealed spot under the wall of the little office, where it could not be seen by the men; and when they came, they found him leaning over the prostrate bailiff, and holding his hand.

"Abershaw is only stunned, Paisley; he will recover soon. The man had a crazy turn, and I followed him, fearing he would hurt some one. He was dangerous, you see, and I had to quiet him with my stick."

"'Twere an ugly lick, sir."

"Yes; but there was no time to measure licks, and we'll have him on his legs presently. Now carry him to the cart, and let us get him to the lodge. Did you fetch the cord?"

"Ay, sir!"

"Bind him, hand and foot, if he struggles. Remember, he's dangerous. If he gets to talking wildly, humor him—tell him it was a fit. Lay

him in his bunk at the lodge, and keep your eyes on him, all of you, till I come. Paisley, you are a sensible fellow; see that the men hold their tongues. You shall know all about this affair in the morning."

"And 'tis not far to day-break now, sir."

"Lose no time then. Get him into the cart."

As the men raised the unconscious bailiff, he moaned slightly, but did not stir.

Grayhurst waited until the sound of the slow-going cart was lost in the depths of the avenue; then he turned to the sadder task before him. Very tenderly, as one moves a suffering child that sleeps at last, he took the poor dead lady in his arms, laying a mourning brother's kiss upon the cold pale brow; and so he bore her, by the path she had so often trod at night, past the great tree, and under the window of the old banqueting-hall, where ghosts might even now be spying, to Marmaduke's ladder, in the farther wing. Here Phyllis waited with her lamp; and as Grayhurst ascended, bearing his painful burden, he thought how he had last seen Barbara entering by that way. For all was plain to him now: the Devil Dick of that night, the wanton rider and the shameless lover as he had imagined, lay dead on his shoulder here; and he shuddered in recalling the slander of his own thought, as if she might arraign him now for the wrong he had done her then.

From the dressing-room, the maid, bearing the light, led the way into the chamber; and there he laid his burden on a couch, and turned to his companion.

“Phyllis,” he said, taking her hand kindly, “it was too late for the doctors,—poor lady!”

The girl sank moaning to the floor, and held her lips with her hands, to forbid her own outcry; and for some minutes Grayhurst left her to herself. Then he said: “Come, lass! be brave and thoughtful. There is much to do; this is dreadful business, and I have only you to help me. Get up! and listen to me.

“Go call the housekeeper. Tell her Miss Lynn has been hurt, and bring her here; I will explain. See that you make no noise; take off your shoes and creep carefully. The Squire must not know to-night.”

Sadly, heavily, the girl struggled to her feet, and for a moment stood bewildered, turning upon Grayhurst that half-questioning, half-imploring look he had seen her turn to Jekyll.

“Phyllis, have you understood me?”

“Ay, sir! Mrs. Pennyweight. I will be careful, sir;” and she disappeared in the gallery, gliding noiseless.

As Grayhurst paused there, following her movements, his mind was in a mad turmoil, stirred by the impetuous assault of surprises, conjectures, memories, suspicions, bafflings, fears: Barbara,

cunningly personating Jekyll ; Phyllis, in the arms of a lover—yet not by assignation, for she had whispered “ Why are you here ? ” Her horror in recognizing her mistress ; the night-rider dead on that couch ; Winifred’s injunction, “ When you have found him, tell no one but me ; ” the wisdom of Dolly’s warning ; Abershaw’s mad jealousy, well-founded ; Devil Dick’s dark wooing ; Phyllis his paramour—impossible ! Already he had looked for signs of guilt in the beautiful creature, and found only the calm of a chaste and tender sorrow. And how had Winifred described Phyllis—Winifred ever wise with the unerring insight of love ? “ This innkeeper’s daughter,” she had said, “ is one of nature’s ladies.” No, no ! impossible.

But Barbara : could it be jealous love after all that had done this deadly work in her ? Was her disguise a trap to catch her maid ?

Then Phyllis returned, followed by the house-keeper, discreet even in her astonishment and consternation. Grayhurst met them at the door, and taking the matron’s hand, led her quickly to the dressing-room.

“ Mrs. Pennyweight,” he said, “ my presence here is enough to tell you all the dreadful truth. You have heard from Phyllis that Miss Lynn has been hurt.”

“ Yes, sir ; but in this room, however could that be ? Oh, let me go to her, sir ! ”

“ Listen to me, and spare me, and help me ! You

and I have need of all our courage, all our prudence, to avert a painful scandal from this house. Your young lady, for a wild thoughtless freak, disguised herself, as you will see presently, and went down to the grounds by that window. Abershaw, the bailiff, who is demented now, and very violent, mistook her for a prowler, and attacked her. I had followed him, but he struck her in the dark. Phyllis was alarmed and came down. My dear old friend, the good name of this family is at stake, and it depends on you and me to save it. The Squire must not know to-night. I will be with him as soon as he stirs, to tell him all.—But your faithful care and kindness come too late.”

“Mr. Grayhurst! What is it you are saying? Oh, sir! you can never mean that our Barbara has been killed!”

Grayhurst groaned, “O God in heaven!”

But the gray-haired gentlewoman only sank humbly on her knees, and bowed her head. So she rested in silence awhile; and when she rose, she was calm and self-contained, with the equanimity that long habit of service imparts. The faithful housekeeper was true to her functions and her trusts; and now she must prepare to receive that grim guest whom it becomes us at all times to entertain with silence and dignity. Here was no place for agitation or curiosity; however she might wonder, she must hold her peace, content that in due time all would be made

clear to her ; only she asked that she might be alone with her young lady for a little while. After that, Grayhurst departed ; and matron and maid were left to hide the tokens of that passionate and fatal masquerading, and dress the actress for a colder part.

Low in the eastern sky faint streaks of dawn had begun to show, when the American returned to the lodge. Paisley waited for him at the gate. The bailiff, he said, had revived in the cart, as they came through the avenue. He was quiet and silent at first, only asking where he was, and who were with him. But in the lodge he had suddenly begun to rave, about killing some one—"Hindman's lass, or Maister Jekyll, first one and then the other." And once he struck out at the men, right and left, and broke for the door ; but they flung themselves upon him, and bound him hand and foot, as Mr. Grayhurst had ordered ; and now he was lying in his bunk there, "still and dumb enough—the poor crazy chap!"

Grayhurst, entering, sent the men out to wait with Paisley, within call ; and closing the door, he sat on a stool beside a small table at the foot of the bunk, and took a long searching look at the slayer whom he had so nearly slain. At first the man lay on his side, quite still, his back to Grayhurst, and seemingly unconscious of his presence ; but presently, with an abrupt defiant movement, as if the unconsciousness had been feigned, he

turned quite over, and faced the American with flashing eyes. He was a muscular and athletic fellow, and Grayhurst, taking the measure of his powers, bestowed a thoughtful glance upon the cords that bound his wrists and ankles ; then he laid his pistol on the table, and lighted a cigar, leaning forward with his elbows on his knees. There was silence for some minutes, broken by the bailiff.

“ Be the man dead ? ”

Grayhurst nodded.

“ Good ! Good ! ”

“ Why ? How did he harm you ? ”

“ Maister Grayhurst, he were a friend o’ yourn.”

Again the American nodded.

“ He were one fine gentleman, you be another ; I be a ragged Romany beggar. So what’s the use o’ talkin’ ? We could never understand each other’s patter.”

“ Why not ? A Romany beggar has killed a fine gentleman, and I want to know the reason why.”

“ Well, then ! yer fine gentleman he just blarsted my poor life. He did leave nowt alive here, but these legs to follow him and this arm to crush him. My lass, that I did live for—my lass, that I were born for—my lass, that I’m a-goin’ to die for—d’ ye know what he did to her ? He just fouled her soul for his own conceit, and left nowt o’ her but what a Romany tramp would be shamed to take to his tent and his bed. And what could I

do, but kill him? Could I fight him? same as the likes o' you, wi' yer swords and yer pistols and yer seconds, and all yer fine talk. If I had begged him to let me try just one grip on him, wi' my bare fists and my teeth, happen he'd 'a' laughed, happen he'd 'a' sent his fellows to duck me first and jail me afterwards. What could I do, but kill him?"

"Nothing," said Grayhurst.

"Nothin', ses you, and you his friend! Be the sky a-fallin'?"

"If he did the foul thing you charge him with, killing was too good for him; and I would cut these cords now, and let you take your chances. But, Abershaw, what if he did not do it? What if this should be all a mad slander of yours?"

"Hoot, sir! Don't sit there and make sport o' a man, because his arms and legs be hobbled, and he can't git at ye. Were my eyes liars and my ears fools, when I did see 'em an' hear 'em together, in th' avenue, in the lane, by th' mere, in the Hurst? Were it her mother's arms as were round her, when I did strike him down just now?"

"Kit, you are raving. You have not seen Phyllis Hindman in Mr. Jekyll's arms to-night. You have not hurt Mr. Jekyll."

The man sprang bolt upright in the bed, and glared at Grayhurst, with wide eyes and open mouth.

"Ye liar! ye sneak!" he roared. "Ye ha' gotten

yer purty pistol there; I dare ye to cut these dommed cords."

"Shall I call in the men, to gag you?" said Grayhurst, calmly, "or will you lie still and hear me out? I say you have not seen Mr. Jekyll to-night; because at this very moment he is alive and well at Sylcaster. You have been beside yourself, I tell you; and it was I who had you bound and brought here. Will you believe me, if I bring Mr. Jekyll to you?"

An expression of helplessness and despair, most pitiful to see, settled upon the man's face.

"For the love o' God!" he cried, "shoot me through the head!"

Presently he lay down again, and turned his face to the wall.

"Go fetch him!" he said. "I mun see the man; I mun touch him; I mun hear him speak."

"Then promise me, Kit, that you will wait patiently, and ask no questions till I return."

"What's the good o' questions? I ha' heerd too much a'ready. Fetch that man!"

Grayhurst went out to the gate, and sent in Paisley. "Stay with him," he said, "but do not talk. I think he will be quiet now. Let the other men remain outside, within call."

We remember that Grayhurst had gone to Wynhold in search of Jekyll, and that old Nanny had said her master was not to return until the morrow, in the afternoon; but later in the day, Luke,

making his regular trip to The Chequers, reported that Mr. Jekyll had spoken to him as he drove out of the inn-yard at Sylcaster ; and had said that, if he could make an end of his business in time, he should ride to Wynhold that night. " Even now," thought Grayhurst, " he may be at the Croft ;" and with the thought, not staying for a horse, he started for Wynhold.

Dick had returned some time before, and was sleeping now ; but roused by the urgent call of his friend, he sprang to admit him, and to read the dreadful tidings in those heavy eyes, and in the first faltering words of grief and kindness. For half an hour these two were face to face, and heart to heart, and thought to thought. When they came forth, to take the road to the lodge, side by side they went in silence, until the American could no longer forbear.

" Jekyll," he said, " when the Vicar saw you ' making night hideous ' under the windows of the Manse, you and I were sleeping at the Croft."

Jekyll turned a quick, inquiring glance, but said nothing.

" When I saw you, at midnight, alight at Overstoke stables, put up your horse there, mount to Miss Lynn's window, and enter her chamber——"

" For God's sake, Grayhurst !"

" You were at the Croft, nursing old Nanny Cole. When I saw you last night, slain by Abershaw in the very arms of Phyllis Hindman——"

Jekyll shuddered; his teeth chattered.

"You were miles away, riding homeward from Sylcaster. And now I know that both night-rider and lover are lying dead in a chamber at Over-stoke, in the person of Barbara Lynn. Tell me, Dick—I have a right to ask, for we are more than friends—what was Barbara to you?"

Jekyll was dumb.

"Were you in her confidence? Did you know that she sometimes personated you?"

"Yes."

"Dick!" said the American, laying his hand fondly on his comrade's shoulder, and for a moment detaining him.

"Dick, did Barbara love you?"

Devil Dick turned; and standing there in the grey light of the early morning, in the confessional of a rural solitude, he grasped that loyal hand, and gazed imploringly into those loyal eyes;—and the American had his answer.

Paisley was watching at the gate when the two gentlemen reached the lodge.

To Grayhurst's inquiry, if the bailiff had been troublesome, he replied, "No, sir; not to say troublesome, but restless like, and chafing, asking often for you—had you come, and had you come."

"Call the men out, Paisley. Mr. Jekyll and I will see him." The gentlemen entered, and closed the door—Jekyll keeping in the background,

while Grayhurst approached the bed. Abershaw lay still, with his face to the wall.

"Kit, I am here."

Instantly the man sat up, all eyes and expectation: "Where is he?"—and Jekyll came forward.

"Let me see him!" said Kit, in a hoarse whisper.

Grayhurst took up the candle, and threw the light on Jekyll's face.

"Let me feel him!"

Jekyll advanced his hand; and Kit, manacled as he was, questioned it with his fingers, as a blind man might.

"Let me hear him speak!"

"You thought you had killed me, Kit," said Dick; "but here I am. You thought I had wronged Phyllis; but I hold her dearer than my life—for Phyllis is my true and honorable wife."

Grayhurst turned and faced Jekyll, with amazement in his eyes.

"Wife!"—gasped the bailiff.

"My wife," repeated Jekyll. "We have been man and wife since last Candlemas."

That strong coarse yokel swooned, like a sick girl; and when he revived he turned away his face, and closed his eyes, and sealed his lips. From that moment he neither spoke nor ate. When they carted him to Yawdley jail, he lay like a log or a stone. In the presence of the magistrate, arraigned for the murder of Miss Lynn, he was

vacant and dumb; and before the sitting of the assize he died in his cell—all that was left of him.

When Paisley and his men had re-entered the lodge, and the two friends halted for some moments at the gate, the American said :

“ Dick, do you remember our first interview at The Chequers, and your petulant sketch of Phyllis? — ‘ Daughter of an inn-keeper, companion of a bar-maid; hairdresser, stay-lacer and pin-sticker in ordinary, to a squire’s niece.’—Were you married then, Dick?”

“ Yes, and my fling offended you :—you could not understand.”

“ True; but I suspected, even then, that behind those bitter words you were hiding something nobler.”

“ And then and there, John Grayhurst, you made me yours for life.”

So they clasped hands and parted, taking different ways—Grayhurst by the avenue, to confront the shock of the Squire’s horror; and Jekyll by the mere-path to Brignal, to face the accusing sorrow of Winifred.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AN END AND A BEGINNING.

THE talk of the parish took its tone from the Manor-House ; the American's version of the tragedy, as he had imparted it to the Squire, was the accepted story : Abershaw, demented by his hopeless passion for Phyllis, had been skulking in the grounds at midnight, and lurking under the maid's window ; Mr. Grayhurst, knowing the man's condition, and fearing he might be dangerous, had gone to look for him at the lodge, and not finding him there, had followed him to the House ; Miss Lynn had imprudently descended from her dressing-room, to stroll in the shrubbery at that romantic hour ; and Kit, mistaking her for a prowler, or a rival perhaps, had sprung upon her from his hiding-place in the clump of firs, and stabbed her in the dark ; Mr. Grayhurst had come upon them, only in time to disable the gipsy, as he was in the act of repeating the stroke ; and Phyllis, in her room overhead, alarmed by the struggle, had gone to Miss Lynn's assistance. Barbara's disguise, and all that it denoted of her secret life, was never known, even to the Squire ;

only to Winifred did Jekyll reveal it, pleading for his own love and honor.

On the evening before the funeral, the two friends, oppressed by the conflict of their own emotions, and the stress of perplexity and dismay, withdrew to the seclusion of the mere, to collect their thoughts and take counsel together. They talked of Barbara; and Jekyll, who alone was in her secret, and had freely passed from one chamber to the other of her double life, now drew the curtain and admitted Grayhurst.

Bright and clever as she was, he said, she was intellectually erratic, and seemed at times to divert herself with freaks of *voluntary* dementia. She had the adventurous temperament; and her disguises and escapades were at first but an expression of intellectual restlessness, and a protest against the stifling dulness of her environments. In her childhood in Normandy, after the death of her mother, abandoned to the unwholesome companionship of Carrick Lynn, it had been his freak to dress the precocious little maid as a boy, and to teach her to ride astride, mounted on her small pony. The impression thus made upon the mind of the child remained to the young woman, and became a serious proposition and conviction. Playfully with the Squire, seriously with Jekyll, Barbara continued to maintain that the side-riding of English women was absurd, because unnatural and unsafe; and the superior equestrianism of the girls

of Oahu was her triumphant argument against the side-saddle.

"You know," said Dick, "that an apartment is always reserved for me at Overstoke; for weeks at a time I have been domiciled there; and I have even fancied that the Squire would have had me regard the Manor, rather than the Croft, as my home. Many of my belongings are in that room—things that I have left there from time to time; especially a riding-suit, such as I usually wear. Barbara found this; and once, when the careering spirit possessed her, the chance for her equestrian exploit tempted her to a characteristic adventure. From Bolingstone she procured ('for private theatricals') a wig in the fashion of my hair, donned my clothes at night, let herself out by the window and ladder, saddled her mare with her own hands, and rode in the avenue and lane. The success of that experiment—its safety and its exhilaration—allured her to bolder flights; before long she appeared in the highway, at Yawdley, under the very windows of the Manse; and it was always Devil Dick, you remember. When the masquerading mood was upon her, she took pains to inform herself of my movements, so that there might never be two Devil Dicks abroad at the same time. Only once, by chance we met, near Brignal Lane; then she saluted me gaily; and when I would have reproached and warned her, she turned and dashed homeward, laughing

merrily ; only the humor of the situation impressed her.

“ Barbara was proudly chaste ; the erratic propensity she inherited was strictly intellectual ; graver license was impossible to her, and the child of Mildred Shustoke was known by the purity of her mind. She was incorrigible by her very innocence ; my bungling homilies were lost upon her, they only served to amuse her ; and with a comical perversity she compelled me to keep her secret by accepting the reputation and the report she had made *for me*. Even Winifred, was first deceived and then bewildered.”

“ And Thorpe ? ” said Grayhurst.

“ Thorpe is clever ; and if he had loved her, he might have found her out. But his scrutiny was confined to her hatred of him, her scorn of his pretensions, and the probable defeat of his mercenary schemes.”

“ Where is Thorpe now ? ” inquired Grayhurst, “ and why did he go away ? ”

“ Who cares where he is ? We have only to rejoice that he is not here,” said Jekyll. “ I think we shall never know why he went, since Barbara is silenced. When I told her the cruel coach had borne her love away to Bolingstone, she merely said, ‘ That is the last of him ! ’ How solemn those words sound now ! ”

Was it a vague presage of her own swift taking-

off, impending then, that prompted Barbara's thoughtful prayer, as she sat at her uncle's knee, so chastened and so still—that the poor folk of the parish might have, next Sunday, their service and their bells, and the ministrations of “that sweet old man” from Ausibel? The bells were tolling now for her, the service for the dead awaited her, and the sweet old man lingered to tell once more the tale that hath ever a charm to hold children from play and old men from the chimney-corner:—how Death is procured “by every instrument and in all chances, and enters in at many doors: by God's mercy or by God's anger; by everything in providence, and everything in manners; by everything in nature, and everything in chance.”

And so, by the lych-lane they passed, and set down their burden under the ancient shed of the lych-gate, resting there for the coming of the priest; and then, as the little company took up the march again, and defiled between the graves toward the church porch, the simple country-folk, of all degrees and ages (for Winifred had “marshaled her children”) fell into their places and swelled the sad procession.

Bareheaded and bowed with grief, behind the bier came the Squire, supported on either side by Grayhurst and Winifred, and followed by Phyllis on the arm of Jekyll—whereat the whole parish wondered; then came Mrs. Pennyweight and Judith with Keyes, the butler, and Toby Hind-

man with Dolly, and staunch Christie Breme—all tender and true.

When one by one the cottagers advanced, to take their last look at the face of the poor murdered lady under the coffin lid, one pale reluctant girl staggered backward, and fell into the arms of Janet Drum. It was Bessie Mann; for she had beheld in Barbara's coffin the white face of Cicely, the Snow Bride, as she had seen it that night at the lych-gate.

A week had passed since the funeral, and the Squire, soothed by the soft touch and tender tones of Winifred, by the thousand cunning allurements of her most sweet solicitude, had been won over to the calm of a pious resignation. By a touching coincidence, she sat now at his feet, in Barbara's place, in Barbara's attitude, her cheek upon his knee, her hand caressing his; and he stroked her brown hair, and exchanged secrets with her in accents soft and low, as once he had done with Mildred's child.

She had told him of the secret marriage; for Jekyll had confided all to her, and had charged her to find shelter for Phyllis in the kindest harbor of the old man's heart; and the Squire had said,

“The lass is to be accepted for Dick's sake,

and beloved for her own sake. But why did they hide themselves? Could they not trust me and you, Winifred?"

"It was the girl's doing," she replied. "Her love is inexpressibly humble and timid, and she feared for Dick. She is an obscure inn-keeper's daughter; you are the Lord of the Manor, and the head of an ancient house. How could she overcome that awe of you, which was proper to her training and her place? She feared your reproach, she feared the sneers of others; she feared that Dick's pride, even his love for you, might come to harm through her. Of course she was all wrong, dear; but then she was perfectly right—don't you see?"

For the first time since that fatal morning when his heart stood still, the Squire smiled.

"Dick reasoned with her," she continued; "Dick remonstrated. His pride was all in her; his love for you protested against her fear of you. I have told you how they were married at Bolingstone, when Phyllis went there at Candlemas to visit some of her mother's people. When they returned, man and wife, Dick would have brought her to me, that we three pretty culprits might wheedle you in concert. But Phyllis shrank from the ordeal. It would be time enough," she said, "when they sailed for America."

"For America, Winifred!"

"Yes, dear: Dick's heart has long been set upon

that scheme—to try his fortunes in the West. And you must let him go, where he can breathe the air of free endeavor and promotion, and measure his strength with men. He has chafed and fretted here too long, and you must set him free. He has assured me that since Grayhurst came, to tell us of Shustokes in Maryland and California, his yearning has grown intolerable. Is it not time, dear, that he should know who his grandfather was—that Devil Dick Shustoke, of Garrison Forest and Overstoke?”

“So Mr. Grayhurst has been telling you my secret!”

“Yes, dear; I am in Mr. Grayhurst’s confidence, because Mr. Grayhurst is in my heart. And I have brought you two secrets, to pay for the one I stole. The American is coming to ask you for your Winifred and your blessing; and your Winifred has caught a fine Maryland Shustoke for you—Jekyll and Grayhurst are cousins; for their grandfathers were brothers. Ah! I knew that would make you happy; I knew that would make you proud! And now, you will let Dick go, will you not? if only that he may flutter the beauties of Baltimore, with the charms of a Midlandshire lass.”

“God bless you, my child!” said the Squire. “You are well named Lady Goodluck, for you come to me in my sorrow with joyful tidings and a glorious promise: John Grayhurst to be Lord

of the Manor of Overstoke; and Devil Dick Jekyll to set up the cross-crosslets of the Shustokes in Garrison Forest! So shall the good old breed be doubly restored, and the Squire's Psalm be sung in a Maryland homestead."

EPILOGUE.

"WINIFREDA."

SIX years later. There have been changes in the economy of The Chequers. Toby Hindman, beginning to feel old and dull, has relinquished the cares of office, and now takes his ease in his own inn, content to abide in conspicuous and ornamental retirement—like his own "old ancient" sign, proclaiming the hospitable traditions of the house. In due time Sylcaster Luke came down from the coach to marry Dolly, and take the "public" off the old man's hands; and somewhere about the house, a little Toby in a pinafore is domineering with a high hand, and doing his best to show "Guv'nor" who is master of The Chequers now.

The bar-maid problem, delicate and dangerous, has been happily solved by the installation of Susan Crotty, Luke's young sister, sufficiently pretty and comically demure, who contrives to maintain a certain amateurish dignity (surprising and delightful to the strictly professional Dolly), whereby osculatory adventurers are warned to keep their distance. And so peace

reigns at The Chequers, and "big Toby," as now he is called to distinguish him from his more important namesake in the pinafore, grows fatter and prouder every day, entertaining old cronies, across a churchwarden and a tankard, with wonderful stories of "my Phyllis lass, away over in Maryland."

"Brignal banks are fresh and fair," and Brignal Hurst is green as ever. The pretty wicket admits the summer visitor to a scene that has lost no feature of its complete and perfect delightsomeness. The garden is as gloriously arrayed, the birds as blythe and tuneful, the bee-hives as populous and bustling, the orchard as opulent, and the burn as wanton and garrulous, as in that earlier time when their fair mistress, blending in herself the charms of bird and flower and bee, crowned the enchanting picture with her presence, in the embowered framing of the porch.

But within, all is changed. Winifred and Judith and Mutzie have departed, leaving only the honest homespun Christie to rule over a mumbling, decrepit kingdom of afflicted crones; for Winifred has transformed Brignal into a Home for poor old women, who would else have been on the parish. Only the hall and the family-room, with their storied belongings, remain as they ever had been; all the rest of the house presents the strictness of a hospital, softened and sweetened by the graces of home; and Christie, taking instructions of wise

love and impartial law from her mistress, administers bounty and flattery, with good sense and a sense of humor, to the exactions of aching bones and the egotism of wheezy querulousness. Thus has Lady Goodluck consecrated her local habitation, and made her name a benediction.

Along the winding path that Winifred had named "Dalliance," every field-flower, every toad-stool seems friendly and familiar, as in the time when Grayhurst first took that way to the churchyard in her sweet company. Are these the same chithering grasshoppers that greeted him then? Is this the same demoralized hen, stealing a nest in the hedge, that Mutzie routed so noisily?

And the Manor-House?—benevolent and placid as of yore; only softly touched with grey, like the temples of a dear old friend, who reminds us that 'tis six years since we met, and he is growing old. Otherwise we look in vain for change in any aspect of the gracious house—save that the clump of firs is gone; Marmaduke's ladder is no longer here; and the grim oaken shutters, that guarded the window of Barbara's dressing-room, have been replaced by a pretty jutting casement, cheerfully curtained, and brightened with growing flowers.

Randal Marmaduke has been gathered to his fathers, and the group of goodly squires in the churchyard is the nobler for his company; while his place in Overstoke House is filled by a Shustoke of the new breed—

“There’s a new foot on the floor, my friend,
And a new face at the door, my friend,
A new face at the door.”

When his will was opened, it was found that, in terms of endearment addressed to “my well-beloved Winifred Blythe,” and with peculiar blessings invoked for her good husband, “my American kinsman, who has right manfully commended himself to my confidence and regard,” he had made John Grayhurst heir to all his lands and tenements, and Master of Overstoke.

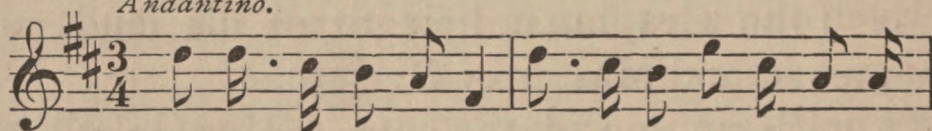
To Richard, son of the late Arthur Jekyll and Johanna, his wife, “and grandson of that Richard Shustoke, of Garrison Forest in Maryland, whom God’s Providence did in mercy spare to be my father’s friend in England”—he bequeathed all the income of his two farms in the parish of Wynhold, and of a certain considerable mill property in Bolingstone, “to be by him and his heirs enjoyed, for the promotion of their fortunes, and the honorable maintenance of their station in Maryland.”

And so John Grayhurst sits in the Squire’s seat, and keeps the Squire’s memory green in the grateful hearts of three parishes.

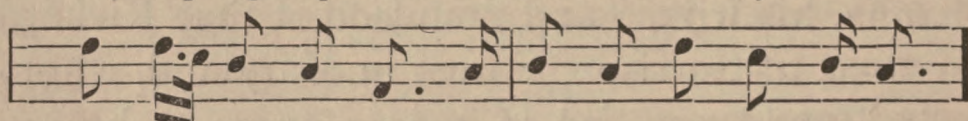
This is his wedding-day, and the old house is sunny and tuneful with the happy recurrence of its benison. He is in the Library, and has opened wide the windows, that no brightness may be lacking anywhere to-day.

As the butler enters with the early mail, to call the new "Squire" to breakfast, a burst of jocund tumult comes through the open door: the voices of children in merry prattle and laughter, and Winifred singing for her little ones the song she sang for Mutzie in the porch at Brignal, before John Grayhurst came.

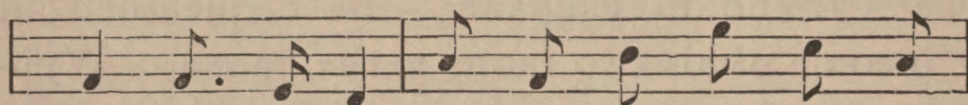
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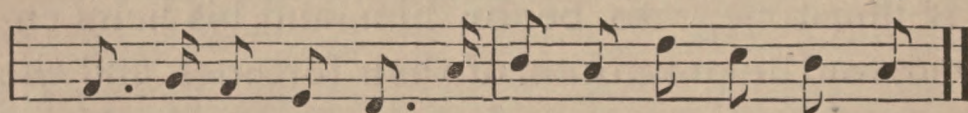
O Spring's a pleasant time, Flow'rs of ev'ry color ; The



sweet bird builds her nest, And I long for my lov-er.



Aye wauk - in' O, Wauk - in' aye, and wea - ry ;



Sleep I can get nane, For thinkin' o' my Dear-ie.

"Feather beds are soft,
Painted rooms are bonnie ;
But a kiss o' my dear love
Is better far than ony."

In honor of the occasion, Keyes has relaxed his professional demeanor, and has decked his button-

hole with a flower, and his face with a subdued smile.

“My respects and duty to you, sir; and wishing you many happy returns of the day.”

“Thank you, Keyes! I trust you will be here to share them with us, always. Send a bottle of wine to Mrs. Pennyweight, with our compliments; and see that the maids and the men have good cheer.”

Even the post has not forgotten the day, for it brings a letter from Jekyll.

“Phyllis reminds me,” he writes, “that this letter may reach you on your wedding-day; and so you must try to find the love upon love we have knitted into every line of it, for you and Winifred, and for your darlings. Our little Gray and Barbara have kissed it so many times, that it will be hard for you to determine where the ink ends and their moist raptures begin. Here in this pretty homestead in Garrison Forest (only there’s no forest now), we are as happy as the day is long. We have all the company we can entertain; for these pleasant Maryland people, whose friendliness is as hearty as their hospitality is profuse, are continually attracted by the beauty and the sweetness of my Phyllis; and so our Croft has become a sort of show-place.—Yesterday afternoon, being Sunday, we walked in the little cemetery of the Shustokes (‘burial-ground’ they call it here). One broad stone is ever the first we seek for and

the last we leave, because Overstoke and Garrison Forest are reunited there: LOST AT SEA: RICHARD SHUSTOKE: BORN AT GARRISON FOREST, APRIL 4. MDCCLIX: RESURGAM!—So Devil Dick, sleeping in Overstoke churchyard, greets Devil Dick in a Maryland burial-ground.”

Thoughtfully Grayhurst leans upon his hand, his gaze resting on the letter lying there, his thoughts far-wandering in a maze of memories; but his reverie is broken by a sudden wild assault of offspring. There are but two of them, but who can number the arms and legs?—between his knees, on his breast, around his neck, on his back, in his hair.

“Mamma says count us, papa! and see if we are all here.”

“What do you think, papa? Poor old Mutzie fell into the bath, and Randal jumped in and saved her life. Was not that brave?”

“Pooh, Winnie!” says Randal; “that’s nothing. Any man would do that much for a fellow-creature.”

“And oh, papa! but Judy is naughty. She refuses to say her prayers—only think!”

“I thought Judy was more obliging; you must have been very tiresome.”

“No, indeed, papa! We only advised her to get down on her knees and say her prayers—so we could climb on her back. Oh, but it’s nice! Just try it once, papa.”

John Grayhurst had a vision then, of his fond old nurse in Maryland, kneeling by his little trundle-bed, and making a back of prayers for him to climb by, ever since.

“I *have* tried it, my dear,” he said.

Ah! delectable mother! beautiful exceedingly, with the dimpled fullness and softness of ripe womanhood; pensive and tender with the ecstasy and yearning of a glorified maternity; fair as Winifred Blythe and gracious as Lady Goodluck; and young, with the immortal youth of a heart that entertains the confidences of angels!

Ah! well may her husband, embracing her so fondly, regarding her so proudly, ascribing to her influence all temporal beatitudes—well may he turn a thought of thankfulness to that unknown poet, who with a poet’s bounty had allotted her to his imagination even from his youth:—

“Away! let naught to love displeasing,
My Winifreda, move your care;
Let naught delay the heavenly blessing—
Nor squeamish pride, nor gloomy fear.

“What though no grants of royal donors
With pompous titles grace our blood,
We’ll shine in more substantial honors,
And to be noble we’ll be good.

“Our name, while virtue thus we tender,
Will sweetly sound where'er 'tis spoke;
And all the great ones, they shall wonder
How they respect such little folk.

“What though from Fortune's lavish bounty
No mighty treasures we possess?
We'll find within our pittance plenty,
And be content without excess.

“Still shall each glad returning season
Sufficient for our wishes give;
For we will live a life of reason,
And that's the only life to live.

“Through youth and age in love excelling,
We'll hand-in-hand together tread;
Sweet-smiling peace shall crown our dwelling,
And babes, sweet-smiling babes, our bed.

“How should I love the pretty creatures,
While 'round my knees they fondly clung!
To see them look their mother's features,
To hear them lisp their mother's tongue.

“And when with envy Time, transported,
Shall think to rob us of our joys,
You'll in your girls again be courted,
And I'll go wooing in my boys.”

THE END.

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